THE FRENCH PORNOGRAPHER

RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

His Life and His Works

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RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

1734-1806

by

C. R. DAWES

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PREFACE

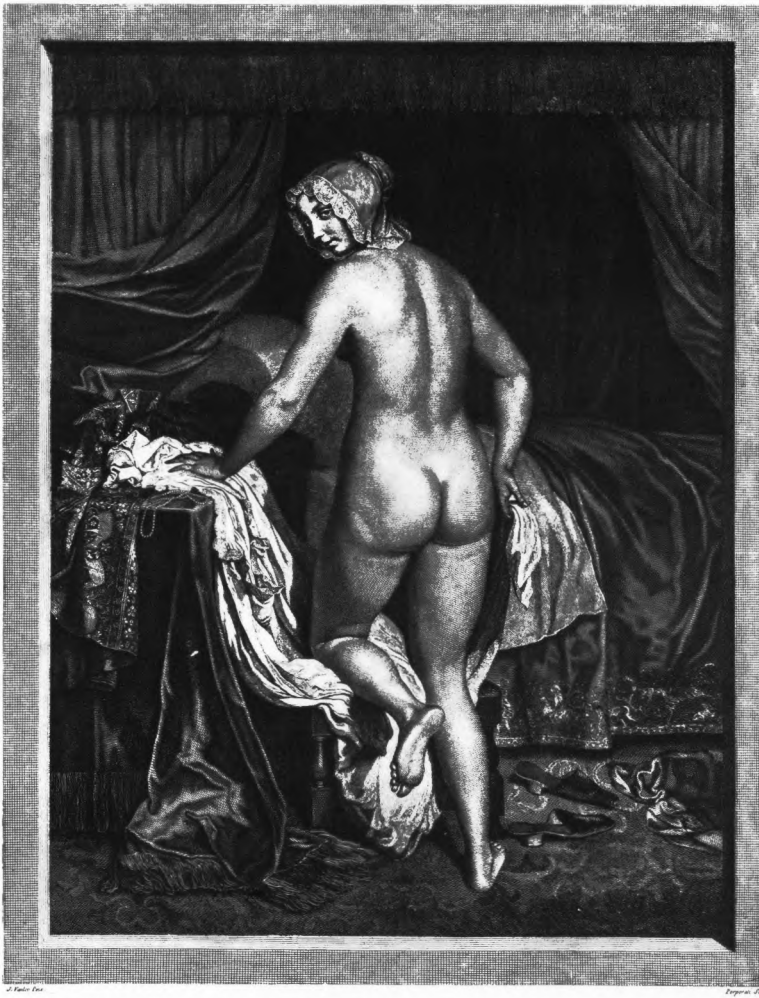
IN writing this book—the first in English—on Restif de la Bretonne, one of the chief difficulties has been that of selection. The amount of material is so vast that it would have been impossible to include everything in a volume of reasonable length. This will explain the reason for what to some people may appear to be omissions—such as there are, are deliberate. Again, there is much that is not suitable for an English book intended for general circulation. That also has been excluded.

Many shortcomings are inevitable in a work of this nature, and for these I crave the reader's kind indulgence. It is planned on entirely different lines from all the books on Restif already existing in French. I have quoted considerably from Restif himself and from other writers on the subject where I have thought it expedient, but the opinions expressed are my own. The many minor works of Restif are dealt with but briefly. If the present study serves to stimulate interest in Restif de la Bretonne and his works, my purpose will have been achieved.

My sincere thanks and acknowledgments are due to Professor F. C. Green and Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. for their courteous permission to use and to quote from certain passages in the chapter on Restif in the former's excellent and interesting book, *Minuet;* also to the Rev. Montague Summers for much kind help and suggestion. It is hoped that the Bibliography at the end will be found useful by those who wish to study the subject further.

C. R. D.

July, 1943.



Le Coucher

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PART I

LIFE

I

PRELIMINARY

FEW writers of any importance have been so variously estimated as Restif de la Bretonne. There appear to be three distinct phases in the fluctuation of his literary reputation. First the contemporary one, when he was regarded in France as a writer of rather curious interest and some merit, though not, perhaps, to the degree which he himself liked to think. But that his writings enjoyed a certain popularity is shown by the fairly ready sale of many of his books, especially the later ones. They were highly praised by such competent judges as Beaumarchais, Mercier, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Mlle. de Lespinasse and many others, and some were in the private library of Marie Antoinette.

Leaders of Parisian Society were curious to meet the author who was so variously discussed. Abroad, his works were more highly esteemed, especially in Germany and Switzerland, where he was regarded as the leading French writer of the time. Schiller, writing to Goethe in 1798 says: "Have you read, by chance, the extraordinary work of Restif, *The Human Heart Unveiled*? (i.e. *Monsieur Nicolas*). I have read it all and, ignoring much in it that is repugnant, dull and revolting, I am delighted with it. A nature of such a sensibility was hitherto unknown to me. The variety of individualities—above all, feminine ones—which one meets in it, the life and the realism of the descriptions, the characteristic details and the picture of French manners in certain parts of the popular classes are most interesting. For me, who have so little opportunity to draw from the outside and to study men in real life, such a book which I rank with the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini, is of an incalculable value." And Humboldt, writing from Paris to the same

correspondent a year later, of the same work, says that it is the truest and most living book that has yet appeared, and that he who has not read it will never understand the French character. In Switzerland his work was even still more highly rated, and Chaillet, literary editor of the *Journal de Neufchâtel*, gave Restif the first place amongst all the writers of his time, in any country. This phase of eulogy and hyperbole ended with the appearance of the long and interesting article published as a Preface to the posthumous work of Restif, *L'Histoire des Compagnes de Maria*, in 1811, written by the Chevalier de Cubières-Palméreaux, who knew him personally. After this came reaction and almost eclipse. Indeed, by 1828, a French writer could say " His works are nearly all forgotten to-day." Sainte-Beuve spoke of him as " the ignoble Restif," Victor Hugo went out of his way to disparage him, and Brunetière is declared to have spoken of him as " that swine of a Restif ! " When mentioned at all, he was treated with indifference or contempt, and his name was not included in any history of French literature. In France, indeed, he was casually dismissed with such names as the " Rousseau of the Gutter " (*le Rousseau du ruisseau*), the " Rousseau of the Market," the " Voltaire of Chambermaids " or the " Teniers of Fiction," and *Le Paysan Perverti* was described as the " *Liaisons Dangereuses* of the Lower Classes." Much of this neglect and contempt may undoubtedly be attributed to the advent of what is known as the Romantic Period, in the heyday of which there was no use for the " realism " of Restif. He was looked upon as sordid and drab.

The transition to the third or " revival " phase of Restif's literary reputation may be said to have begun shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of the studies by Gérard de Nerval (1852) and Charles Monselet (1853), who both, albeit somewhat tentatively, claimed a far higher position for Restif than he had hitheto been accorded in France since 1811. In 1875 appeared the very comprehensive and elaborate

Bibliographie et Iconographie de tous les ouvrages de Restif de la Bretonne by Paul Lacroix, which shows that interest was awakening, and this interest was still further stimulated by the appearance of Isidore Liseux's complete reprint of *Monsieur Nicolas* in fourteen volumes in 1883. From then, appreciation steadily grew, and has continued to the present time. He has been compared with Balzac, and later, with Zola, and it was generally recognised that both these writers had derived to a considerable extent from him. The apogee was reached when M. Funck-Brentano, whose admirable work on Restif appeared in 1928, declared him to be " the greatest writer of the eighteenth century," and perhaps what may be termed the apotheosis was the special bi-centenary Restif Exhibition (Paris au XVIIIe. Siècle : Le Paris Populaire) at the Musée Carnavalet in 1934–5, organised by the then new curator, M. J.-L. Vaudoyer, which contained much of interest, and there was also a special " Numéro consacré à Restif de la Bretonne à l'Occasion du bi-centenaire de sa naissance, 23 Octobre 1734 " of the well-known " Revue d'Humanisme Médical " *Hippocrate* in September 1934, containing articles by such authorities as M. Maurice Heine, M. Henri Bachelin and Dr. Louis Charpentier. The latest and somewhat modified tribute, but a good book, is *Le Vrai Visage de Restif de la Bretonne* by A. Tabarant published in 1936.

In England, Restif does not seem to have been much appreciated. The only translations of him that I can find are *Pictures of Life*, two volumes, published in 1790, without his name, a version of *Tableaux de la Vie*, originally *Monument du Costume*, of which it is the sub-title, with plates by Moreau le jeune, and is one of Restif's minor works ; *The Double Life of Cuthbert Cockerton* (1895), an adaptation of the obscene *L'Anti-Justine ;* and the excellent complete translation of *Monsieur Nicolas* by R. Crowdy Mathers, six volumes, 1930–1, with an admirable Introduction by Havelock Ellis. Nor has much been written about him in English. Saintsbury, it is true, and rather surprisingly

for so pudic a critic, includes Restif in his *History of the French Novel* (1917), in which he only allows, under pressure, Choderlos de Laclos to appear in what he calls his " Penitentiary," and will not admit Louvet de Couvray at any price, at all. He considers Restif far above these two authors, and says that " as regards the comparison with Rousseau, Restif is almost a gentleman, and he could not possibly have been guilty of Rousseau's blackguard tale-telling in the cases of Madame de Warens or Madame de Larnage." He calls Restif a writer who has been unfairly ostracised, and recognises that his actual qualities as tale-teller are very remarkable. He adds that could Restif but have freed himself from his obsession of sex, " he might have been a most remarkable novelist, and as it is his *mere* narrative faculty is such as by no means every novelist possesses." And Professor F. C. Green, in his delightful *Minuet* (1935), says that nothing written by Restif can be quite ignored by the student of French eighteenth-century thought and manners. " He is at once the Hogarth and the Greuze of the eighteenth-century French novel." He compares him with Balzac, and says, " Until we come to Balzac, there is no character in European fiction who may be compared in stature or in originality with Gaudet d'Arras " (in *Le Paysan et la Paysanne Pervertis*), " and to have anticipated Balzac is in itself a title to fame."

Let us, then, endeavour to envisage what kind of a writer and personality this very differently estimated author really was.

II

LIFE. 1734—1755

OF few writers can it be said that their life is of so much importance in relation to their work as is the case with Restif. In nearly all his books there is much of himself, his experiences, his own life. For though his books put forth as truth may be in part fiction, his books put forth as fiction were to a much greater extent truth. As Havelock Ellis said, " He himself was always there."

Nicolas Edmé Retif was born on October 23rd, 1734, at a farmhouse next to the church in the village of Sacy, thirty-two kilometres (roughly about twenty miles) from Auxerre in the Department of the Yonne, on the border of Burgundy and Champagne. He himself gives the date of his birth as November 22nd, which is not correct, and there is also some confusion about his surname. The family name was Retif (with no accent), and it was only in later years that Nicolas altered it to Restif, which he had come across in the *History of Auxerre* by the Abbé Lebeuf. The rest of his name was adopted from the title of a larger farm at the other end of the village, to which his parents moved in 1742, when he was eight years old, called " La Bretonne," which still exists, and which he himself spelt " Bretone," probably the contemporary form of the word. It thus appears that the correct spelling should be " Retif de la Bretone," but as the now generally accepted form is " Restif de la Bretonne," I have adopted that spelling, the other seeming somewhat pedantic. A fantastic and elaborate Genealogy prefixed to *Monsieur Nicolas*, in which he shows himself to be descended in the 67th generation from the Roman Emperor Pertinax, may be disregarded.

His father, Edmé Retif, was forty-four years of age at the time of his birth, and had been married a second time.

By his first wife he had had seven children, and Nicolas was the eldest of seven more that he had by his second wife. He was a farmer and vine-grower, and also held various offices in the village, acting as Notary and also " lieutenant of the parish." He was much respected and looked up to in the locality, and appears to have been an eminently worthy man, serious, reliable, hard-working and of the utmost probity. There is a convincing and delightful portrait of him, probably somewhat idealised, in Restif's *La Vie de Mon Père* (1778). His second wife, the mother of Nicolas, Barbare Ferlet, was not, like his first, a peasant, but was of a fairly good Burgundian family, and had been maid to the Princesse d'Auvergne in Paris. It was from her father that the name of Nicolas was derived. From his earliest years she trained her eldest son in his manners and elementary education, instilling also a care for his dress and personal appearance which was to be sadly neglected in later life, but which distinguished him from his youthful companions in the village, amongst whom, from a very early age, he became known as " Monsieur Nicolas." He himself declares that he was a beautiful child, with big dark eyes, natural curls and a fine complexion. " This is quite usual in children with fine features of the Italian caste," he adds. " They are beautiful up to adolescence." He attended the village school, and helped, so far as he was able, with odd jobs about the farm. He was a timid boy, extremely sensitive and had a strange fear of dogs, as also an acute dread of ridicule. At night in bed, he suffered from involuntary micturition, and in later years was subject to the same incontinence. He was remarkably precocious sexually, and from his very early years was extraordinarily subject to such influence, a trait which was to remain with him for the whole of his long life, which was, indeed, to become almost an obsession with him and of which he is never tired of telling us about. It is therefore necessary to refer to a few incidents of this kind in his extreme youth. At the age of four, he states, he derived pleasure from the

endearments of Marie Piôt, the twenty-year-old attractive daughter of a neighbour, who every Sunday carried him in her arms to vespers, and would put her hand under his little petticoats and gently slap and tickle him and then kiss him—the girl was as innocent as himself, and like the other young girls of the place, petted and made a fuss of him. " My delicate effeminate face was very much admired, and when Marie carried me to church, the prettiest girls used to surround her in order to kiss me. But her caresses were prejudicial, not only to my morals, but to my health, for the memory of them over-stimulated my fiery imagination before I had come to my full strength." He was to experience many more similar stimulants. A scene he witnessed between a husband and wife was one of them, and some of the amusements indulged in by the village children amongst themselves provided several others. But perhaps the worst influence of all on the impressionable boy was that of the brothers Courtcou, François and Pierre, two young scamps of seventeen and sixteen who successively came as shepherds to La Bretonne when Restif was nearly twelve years old. Pierre, the younger, was even more vicious than his brother. Restif says of them, " the Courtcous exceeded in salacity anyone I had ever known. They were from Nitry, where principles are looser, the air purer and the heart more corrupt than at Sacy. My father knew roughly the two brothers, but he had lived in Nitry at a time when it was very much less corrupt ; when depravity such as François's could not have been conceived, still less that of Pierre. They had been corrupted by vagrancy since their father's death. Never, perhaps, was there a worse character than Pierre Courtcou, nor one who knew better how to disguise his vices." With these boys the young Restif was sent to the pastures to tend the sheep. Previously he had looked after the poultry, the bees, the ewes and the lambs by himself. His imagination now quickened into life made him avid for stories, and the more wonderful and exciting they were, the better he

liked them. Naturally, he asked the brothers if they knew any, and when they said they did, pressed them to relate them. This they proceeded to do, but liberally sprinkled the adventurous and romantic tales with the most obscene details. Those of François were bad enough, but those of Pierre, who succeeded his brother as shepherd at the end of a month, were infinitely worse. The seed of corruption fell on fertile soil. The boy was horrified but fascinated, and always longed for more. Pierre, especially, took a delight in encouraging him. " His incessant talk of his filthy desires and his obscene stories influenced my character and temperament, directing all my thoughts, and consequently all my energy, towards physical love." Pierre also indulged his tastes in the supernatural, and on one occasion the two boys tried to raise the Devil, by means of a conjuration taken from an old book that was in the house, but Restif became afraid and the attempt was abandoned. Shortly after this, Pierre seduced one of Restif's half-sisters and was thereupon immediately dismissed.

But Restif had himself already had some amorous experiences. From his earliest years he had conceived ardent fancies for several pretty girls of the neighbourhood. An important factor in his sexual psychology was his passion for small feet in dainty shoes, which amounted to what is now known as " shoe-fetishism," and endured throughout his life. He himself tells us, referring to one of these girls, Agathe Tilhien, " who always used blue ribbon for binding up her shoes," that, " it was she who, from the age of four years, gave me my first idea of a pretty foot. I would have loved to see hers, and I would have touched and kissed her shoe with pleasure, whilst I had the greatest disgust for those of men or of old women. . . . When still but an infant, I was susceptible not to the beauty of the bosom (that was to come later), but to the elegance of the feet and the shoes of young women. Agathe Tilhien's foot made the first impression upon me, and before I was four years old I wanted to kiss it. Was

that derived from a previous existence in which I had been subject to that passion? I should presume so, if I had the slightest data to go on. She was eighteen years old; the disproportion between our ages was therefore great." At the age of nine, he had been greatly attracted by a pretty girl from Moyers, a relative of the village priest, named Suzanne Colas. And here we have another reference to the same thing. "She was daintily shod," he says, "in coloured silk shoes with buckles set with brilliants, which I greatly admired, and was otherwise quite charming." He goes on: "I doubt if even a little negro, though mature so young that he can be a father at the age of nine or ten, could have desired women at an earlier age than I. Soon it will be seen that I achieved a similar maturity, and this phenomenon is not the least striking, nor the least interesting in my life. But this passion for the beauty of the foot—so powerful that it has never failed to rouse desire in me, and could render me oblivious even to ugliness—does it spring from the body or the mind? In all those who have it, it is there to excess; On what is it founded? Is it related to a light ease in walking? To the sensuous grace of the dance? A factitious passion for shoes is but a reflection of that for the beautiful feet which give grace even to animals; one grows accustomed to think of the envelope as the thing itself. Thus the attraction which dainty shoes have had for me from childhood is an artificial taste based on a natural one; whereas my passion for a little foot has a physical cause only, indicated in the proverb: *Parvus pes, barathrum grande*, the facility thus given being favourable to procreation. When I went into a house and saw the holiday shoes paraded in a row, as is the custom, I thrilled with pleasure: I blushed, I lowered my eyes, as if in the presence of the wearers." This subject will be referred to again, but in connection with this fetish of Restif's we may here recall the abnormally small feet and dainty shoes which are such a striking feature in the charming illustrations to his books, which were designed

by Binet under the explicit and minute directions and descriptions of the author himself.

Restif describes himself as he was at nine years of age. " The most noble of all passions smouldered in my breast and gave off sparks from time to time before I was capable of response. This impotence was the result of bodily conformation, and therefore insurmountable, so it found expression in that active and painful impulse which is habitually felt by eunuchs. And it was this impotent passion which made me shy and wild. I was handsome ; my hair, at that time a golden chestnut, curled naturally, making me look like one of those angels, children of the laughing imagination of Italian painters. Dignity was added to the delicacy of my face by an aquiline nose and fine eyes ; and by the fresh scarlet of my lips, which have earned me so many happy adventures. I was pale with the whiteness of a lily ; slim and graceful in a district where the build is heavy." He goes on to speak of his shyness, and says : " Two old men (relations), deceived by my exterior and observing that I lowered long-fringed lids over great eyes at the lightest word of praise, said to my parents : ' This son of yours is just a bashful girl ; are you sure of his sex ? ' I imagine that all men who are violently moved towards women have this same bashfulness, this same timidity, the same factitious leanings : for they feel in their impubic youth what others are only aware of later. So must the most bashful and blushing girl be considered the one who is most inclined towards the pleasures of love." And he admits, " that ungovernable eroticism which was to torment the best years of my life."

Restif asserts that he first became a father at the age of ten. A neighbour engaged a pretty reaper from Precy-le-Sec, a plump, bouncing, good-natured girl named Nannette. " I was struck by her appearance, but in a fashion not till then experienced. It was desire that I felt and not love ; a burning fire ran through my veins : Nannette was for me the first woman. I was dumb-

founded by this new, this prodigious reaction. There was something lascivious about her which I had never before seen, and my imagination was finally inflamed." Then follows a vivid account of the scene that took place between them in the stable where the mules which the neighbour used for his ploughing were kept. In this, Nannette seems to have been the leader, and Restif declares that the result of this encounter was that Zéphire whom he was first to meet thirteen years later, with the consequences that we shall see.

At the age of eleven, Restif was sent to continue his education with a friend of his father at Joux, and here he became attracted by another young girl, Julie Barbier, a fellow scholar, who, when he was unwell, attended to him, and " without knowing it, I had made her a mother " !

And then, when he was nearly twelve, he was stricken down with smallpox, and his life was despaired of, though he eventually recovered. But, " it was the end of my beauty. When I was cured of the smallpox, my face was as ugly as it had been handsome. My features were coarsened, and completely changed ; my curly chestnut-gold hair had fallen ; it grew again black and straight. I saw myself for the first time in the glass with a kind of horror, and from that moment became even more of a bear. I had now nothing left to give me confidence. I found that nature had gone too far." He retained the marks of the disease for the rest of his life.

It was after his recovery from the smallpox that Restif acted as shepherd for his father, in company with the brothers Courtcou. And now came what was perhaps the chief turning-point in Restif's life, and was, as he himself said, to determine his future lot. An elderly and much-honoured relative visited the family, and after the boy had been submitted to a long and close examination as to his character and attainments and mental qualities, Restif's father said, " Well, worthy cousin, what do you think ? Shall I make a farmer of him ? " " No," answered the old man in a decided tone, and proceeded

to give his reasons. " I will have him taught," said the father, " and then we shall see what is best to make of him. For you can assure me that his mind is fitted for study ? " " I can assure you of it," replied the other. And so it was decided.

The eldest of Restif's half-brothers was Curé of Courgis, a village three miles from Chablis and nine from Auxerre. The second one, the Abbé Thomas, a Jansenist,[1] was Master of the choir-boys at Bicêtre, near Paris. The latter was asked if he would have Restif with him for tuition, and though at first inclined to refuse, under pressure from his elder brother he eventually consented. And so, the boy was taken by his father to Paris for the first time. After staying the night at Auxerre, they travelled partly by boat on the river and partly by road, and eventually Restif was left in the care of his half-brother at Bicêtre. He gives the following description of the Abbé Thomas. " He was a tall, thin young man, with a long wood-coloured face and a blue chin ; his skin was shiny, his nose aquiline and his eyebrows thick and black. Through an accident he had a lump as big as a walnut on the right cheek. He was reserved, very strong without appearing to be so, hasty, passionate and lascivious, but master of himself through pious exercise. . . . He did not love Barbare Ferlet's children and took pleasure in mortifying them." Not a pleasing portrait. The Abbé pointed out to the boy that he had a good many pupils of whom he would be one, and that to call him " brother " would make a difference between them and the newcomer, so that it would be better to address him as *Monsieur*, as did the others. " Brother " was the title used by the pupils among themselves, and as there were already a Brother Nicolas and a Brother Edme, Nicolas Edme was to be called Brother Augustin, " a fine name and that of the Church's greatest doctor," said the Abbé.

It is clear that there was no affection between the half-

[1] The Jansenists were renowned for being excessively rigid and puritanical, and have been described as the " Catholic Calvinists."

brothers. The harsh and narrow character of the Abbé was antipathetic to the sensitive boy, who longed for sympathy and understanding friendship, and the Abbé had no interest in his unwanted and—since his illness—unattractive-looking relative. There was nothing in common between them, and the Abbé entirely lacked a sense of humour—not that Restif himself had much.

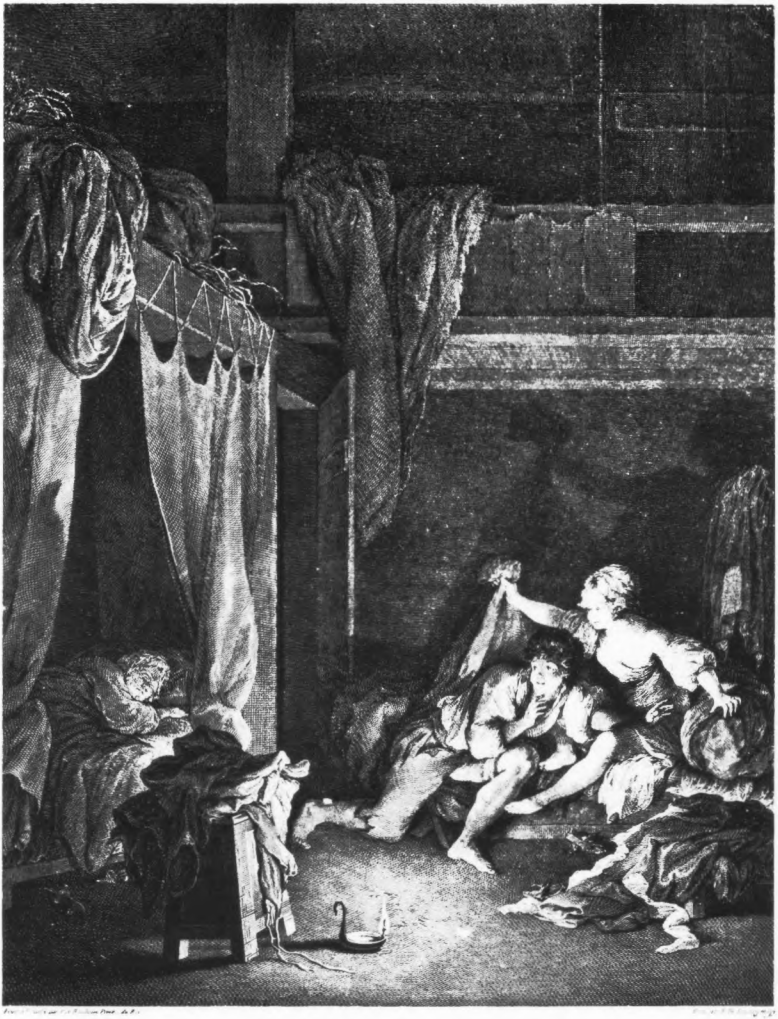
There were at this time between thirty and fifty boys at Bicêtre. They were dressed in scarlet cassocks, with scarlet capes over their white surplices and little round red skull-caps, when, seated in the stalls below the priests, they assisted at the services. When Restif first saw them thus, he exclaimed ingenuously : " Oh, what a lot of little Curés ! " for he had never yet seen any priests who were not Curés, and thought the two words were synonymous.

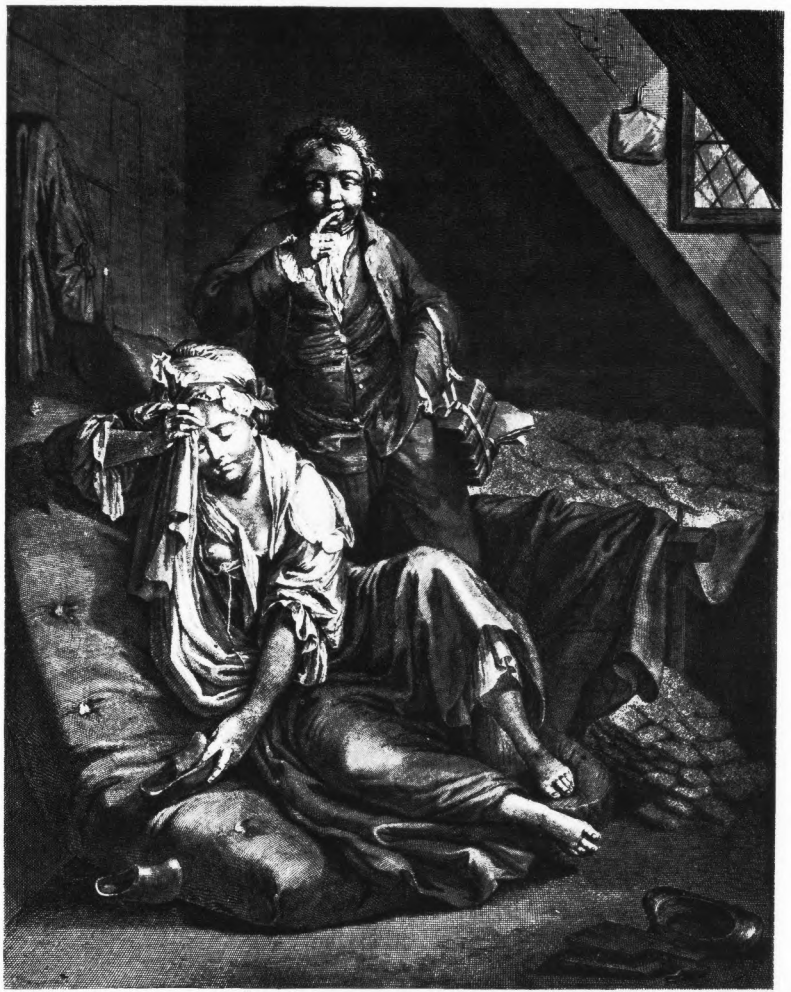
Restif, who was now getting on for thirteen years of age, states that the food was unappetising and badly cooked. He naturally felt very sad and homesick in his new surroundings, but was much comforted by two of the acolytes, who were also the favourites of the priests, Brother Nicolas Fayel and Brother Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, who were a year or so older than Restif. These two boys were extremely kind and sympathetic towards the newcomer, and did their best to dissipate his sadness. They were his neighbours in the dormitory. Restif describes them as follows : " Thanks to my two kind companions, little by little my grief abated. Fayel especially was so gentle and gracious in his ways to me in the early stages, that he won my heart completely. Jean-Baptiste seemed at first sight to have something of the dandy in him ; he was exquisite, elegant and charming ; but he was neither fickle nor capricious. . . . Bound in close friendship to Fayel, I was no happier than before, but for opposite reasons. My two first friends, rough peasant lads, had been wanting in sensibility ; Fayel, on the other hand, was over-sensitive, capricious and jealous ; it was he who gave me an understanding of the sufferings of women

later : a new Tiresias,[1] I in some sort played the part of the embarrassed mistress, constrained in conversation, uneasy even in her glances. Once my chosen friend, Fayel, as I have said, quarrelled with me and tormented me, or would speak only to pretty Brother Jean-Baptiste, whose effeminate face and brilliant rosy colouring suggested a girl in disguise rather than a real boy. One evening, Fayel, with whom I often played after supper at chess or with the large twelve-sided dice, was more than usually sulky with me ; he had not wanted to play with me, and he would not speak to me. I could not sleep that night. In the morning I said to him : ' What have I done ? Only tell me, and I am ready to make amends ; but do not be cross with me any more. I cannot do without your friendship.' Brother Nicolas looked at me, and I saw that there were tears in his beautiful eyes ; I was so much touched, that I threw my arms about his neck. ' Ah,' he said, ' it is my misfortune to be jealous. Dear Augustin, I hate Brother Jean-Baptiste ; never speak to him again.' ' Do you want me to be ungrateful ? Has he not cared for me like a brother ? Ah ! you cannot want me to be ungrateful ! ' I paused for a moment ; then glanced at Fayel, and it seemed to me that he had turned pale. ' Very well, then, I will be ungrateful,' I said. ' Yes, even that is preferable to grieving you.' Thus was our friendship cemented. But I begged Brother Joseph, my neighbour on the right, to make my excuses to young Poquelin. And the boy sent me this message : ' I know Fayel ; do not let Brother Augustin be troubled on my account ; I shall always love him, and Fayel too '."

An anecdote which illustrates both the lack of humour of the Abbé Thomas and the playful teasing of young Poquelin, is that of when Restif, proud of his remarkable memory, said that he could repeat the whole of the first

[1] This refers to Ovid : *Metamorphoses*, iii, 315–337, where Tiresias is described as having had the experience, at different times, of being of both the male and the female sex.





L'Aventure fréquente

Dessinée par Schoreau Peintre de son Altesse Sérénissime Electorale de Saxe.
Gravée par L. Halbou.

A Paris chez L'Auteur, rue de l'Oseray, maison de M. Bellard Graveur en Taille douce.

part of a sermon they had heard the Abbé preach shortly before, and the Abbé made him stand in the middle of a circle and prove it. The boy closed his eyes and did as he had said, to the astonished admiration of them all. " Brother Jean-Baptiste who, as the beloved disciple, could say what he liked, looked at the Abbé and said, smiling : ' He did not learn that sermon by heart in his village ! ' But the Abbé regarded his favourite with such severity that the boy turned pale, and two tears fell from his lowered eyes."

These two boys were the pets of the priests, Poquelin being the particular favourite of the Abbé Thomas. They were allowed many privileges, and at meals sat at the small table with the Masters, where better food was served. In such an atmosphere and with the personalities and characters of the two boys, Restif was in contact with something that until then had been unknown to him. " Though *philandric* vice," he says, " is utterly foreign to me, it might have been all up with my morals if, as with that Roman, a dagger stroke to my virtue had not pierced the abscess that was killing me." In *Les Revies*, which was published in *Les Posthumes*, the Preamble to which is a more outspoken supplement to the earlier part of *Monsieur Nicolas*, he is still more explicit. " At Bicêtre, my two charming comrades, the young Poquelin and young Fayel, were the mistresses of our masters. Under the pretext of whipping them, they caressed them for hours at a time, in the mornings. They employed them for obtaining from the women of the place all the things that they wanted for the table. These two lads were very friendly with me. They caressed me as the others caressed them. . . . I was never a pederast, whereas some saints have been. It was even by this example that the Abbé Thomas seduced Poquelin and Fayel, who both, in albs and little red caps, looked like two pretty girls." The " dagger stroke " referred to by Restif took the shape of an amorous nun named Sister Mélanie. She and some of the others received the three boys with delight when

they paid them their weekly visits to obtain the required goods. "The Mother Superior led away Fayel; Sister Saint-Augustin took Poquelin, and I was left alone with Mélanie. . . . Our success was attributed to the insinuating manner of my two friends, but they owed it entirely to their charms; and I got as much as they did, thanks to my precocious maturity." There were also others, such as the blonde fifteen-year-old Rosalie, who was Sister Saint-Augustin's secretary. Restif declares that he made mothers of the Superior, Sister Mélanie and Sister Saint-Augustin, but his word cannot always be taken regarding these and similar assertions. Paternity was another of his *idées fixées*.

There was but a small library of 366 volumes in general use at Bicêtre, and naturally most of these were religious. Restif increased his already good knowledge of the Bible, and found much interest in Andilly's *Vies des Pères des Deserts* and the *Actes des Martyrs*, but especially in Rollin's *Histoire Ancienne* and the *Histoire Romaine*.

Then, in 1747, Christophe de Beaumont, the new Archbishop of Paris, started his campaign against the Jansenists, one result of which was to expel the masters and their pupils from Bicêtre.

Restif, now thirteen, stayed for a short time with his married sister in Paris. Amongst the books he read there was *Gil Blas*, which entranced him. There was also an episode with a young and pretty negress, who lived near by. After this, he went to live at Courgis with his eldest half-brother, the Curé, and the Abbé Thomas was there too. His chief study was to be Latin, and he made good progress with it, and also learned some Greek. The Curé was less harsh and austere than the Abbé Thomas, but somewhat indifferent. And now happened the most purely romantic episode of Restif's life: he saw Jeannette Rousseau for the first time! This was at Communion on Easter Sunday, 1748, in the church at Courgis. The then-romantic hyper-amorous boy, whose thoughts dwelt so much upon girls, had for long been dreaming of and

gradually creating in his mind, an ideal of perfect girlhood. And now she appeared in the flesh ! He becomes almost lyrical in his description of her—" I watched first the women and then the young girls advance ; and among the latter was one whom I had not yet seen, and who eclipsed them all. She was modest and beautiful and tall ; and there was something virginal about her ; she had but little colour, surely to enhance the brilliance of the blush of modesty, and to accentuate her innocence. She was formed like the Nymphs, dressed with more taste than her companions and, in particular, she had that all-powerful charm which I could never resist, a pretty foot. Her bearing, her beauty, her taste, her attire, her virgin colouring—all realised the adorable chimera of my imagination. ' It is herself ! There she is ! ' I said half aloud, for the thought was too vivid for me not to utter it. She engrossed the whole of my attention, the whole of my heart, the whole of my mind and soul ; all my thoughts, all my desires ; I saw no one but her. I did not know her name. Mass came to an end. I went out. The celestial beauty was walking some paces in front of me." Another girl addresses her by name ; the divinity speaks ; the voice is as sweet as the lovely face. " Fellow-citizen and reader ! This Jeannette Rousseau, this angel, had unconsciously decided my fate. . . . I have done everything to become worthy of this girl, whom I have never possessed, *to whom I have never spoken ;* whose name, now, at sixty, makes me tremble, after forty-six years of absence, during which I have never had the courage even to dare ask news of her ; whom I am always conscious of adoring in spite of what you will read ; of whose death I dread to hear as of the greatest misfortune. Yes, her death would extinguish what remains of my energy. I love to think that she is alive and sometimes hears tell of me, and that she has never married ! "

Here, Restif is completely and absolutely sincere. This was the *one* purely platonic, idealistic and really deep

passion of his life. It was a dream, an ideal, almost a religion, that remained with him to the end. It is another —though a lesser—Dante and Beatrice. Through all his degradations and sordid *liaisons*, Jeannette for ever remained to him a celestial vision, his lodestar. And the very remoteness of contact enhanced it. At the time when Restif first saw her, she was between sixteen and seventeen. He frequented places where he might see her, gazed at her ardently in church, often lingered round the house where she lived, but never came into closer contact with her, except upon one occasion. When he says that he never spoke to her, he is not *strictly* correct, for he actually spoke " two words ! " It was two years after he had first seen her. " The second day after my return (to Courgis) is for ever memorable, for on it I spoke to Jeannette Rousseau. I was alone in the house : Sister Pinon had gone out, my two comrades were at the spring, the Abbé Thomas was in the garden, and the Curé in his church. Jeannette knocked at the courtyard door. I was thinking of her at the moment : regret for my abandoned studies had again laid hold of me, and I was weeping. Hearing a knock, I wiped away my tears and went to the door. My voice died on my lips ; I reddened, I grew pale ; my agitation was so great that I was obliged to lean against an elm tree that grew in the courtyard. Such was my declaration of love ; such the language I spoke to my secret adoration. Jeannette smiled and blushed. How beautiful she was ! The music of her voice recalled my fugitive soul. ' Monsieur,' she said, ' my father has sent me to ask whether Mlle. de Courtives is with the Curé to-day.' ' N . . . no, M . . . ademoiselle.' I have never said more than those two words to her, the object of my most ardent love. . . . Mlle. Rousseau curtseyed, and went away without another word." Forty-four years later, after his divorce from his wife, Restif for a moment entertained the idea of marrying Jeannette Rousseau. It was only later still, in 1794, that he discovered that she had been dead for more than ten

years. And one of his cherished thoughts was realised : she died unmarried.

Restif pursued his studies. Both his half-brothers were religious bigots, narrow-minded, and treated him none too well. They did not approve of him learning Latin, and wished him to read only religious books. He was therefore not very happy, but the Chaplain, M. Foynat, who also lived there, was kinder and more sympathetic and understanding. Two other pupils from Bicêtre, Huet and Melin, were likewise there, but were not allowed to learn Latin. In lesson-time, Virgil and Phœdrus, St. Jerome and St. Augustine, were the authors Restif read. But one day, without his brothers' knowledge, he chanced upon a Terence, which he devoured secretly with the greatest delight. But the Abbé Thomas, coming upon him unawares, wrathfully snatched the treasured volume from him and locked it away. The boy then started to write a Latin comedy surreptitiously himself, so much was his imagination stimulated by the *Andria*, which he had not been able to finish reading. At the end of a year he was able to speak and write Latin with an ease which delighted the good Chaplain, but did not please his brothers. Restif's description of the Latin comedy he thus wrote when he was between fifteen and sixteen, under the inspiration of Terence, and which may be regarded as his first composition, is interesting. " The first act was only a somewhat involved exposition, but in the second I introduced my female characters. The conversation of the men must have been strange enough, as I had nothing but Courtcou's gallantries to draw upon. My characters were all taken from Sacy, from amongst my old companions and the young village girls. I had not enjoyed enough liberty at Bicêtre or Courgis to place the time or scene in either ; and the unities of time and place, a natural dramatic rule, led me automatically to set the whole action in the same locality, and begin and finish on the same day. There were three lovers : myself, fond and passionate, a true *Pamphylus ;* Etienne Dumont,

a sort of *Carinus*, lamenting for his stolen mistress as in Terence, but in this case rightly so, because Marie Fouard was the prize, and I too wanted her ; and lastly, Courtcou, a libertine who only desired women to slake his brutal lust. This character was entirely my own creation, and never was there one like him in any comedy ; it is impossible to give any idea of him, save by recalling that cannibal I have already mentioned from the neighbourhood of Toulouse. In this part my imagination was disordered in the extreme, and I rioted among Pierre Courtcou's obscene descriptions. I need not say how much I feared lest this note-book should fall into the Abbé Thomas's hands ! I always kept it in my pocket." One day the precious note-book had a very narrow escape from the prying eyes of the Abbé Thomas, so in an agony of fear and apprehension, Restif destroyed it.

But his next literary effort was to be even more unfortunate. Amongst some books which were lent to him was *Les Poésies de L'Abbé Montreuil*, a volume of gallant verse, which he carefully hid, and successfully returned to its owner, without detection. But it had stirred his lively imagination. " A veil had fallen when I read Terence, and had been introduced to fine literature : a second veil fell when I read French gallant poetry, and was given a glimpse of the contemporary manners of my own country, in its Court and fashionable world. More than anything else, gallantry held my attention, and the more so as an Abbé was writing. The Abbés I had known so far were strict and pious : a gallant Abbé was a phenomenon." So his next production was gallant verse in French, in the form of what may be termed a burlesque poem. In this, Restif imagined that he had rendered the State a tremendous military service, and when the King wished to reward him, he asked not for riches, but for certain lands, enclosed by a wall 25 feet high and six deep, with a fine house of twenty-eight rooms, with birds and animals of various kinds, and above all, twelve young girls that he should choose from the villages of Courgis,

Nitry and Sacy. Needless to say, Jeannette Rousseau was the first of these. The King grants his request, and the rest of the poem described his estate and the charms of the twelve maidens, these last in considerable detail. He says himself that the poem was " obscene as was my custom." It may be noted that at this time, when he was not quite sixteen, Restif had already surreptitiously reached such writers as Martial and Nicolas Chorier.[1] And then, one day, the manuscript was found by the Abbé Thomas. Horrified, he took it to the Curé, and they decided to send for Restif's father to take the boy back home. Other things that happened were construed to his disadvantage. " My brothers and I were now completely at odds. The Curé never spoke to me : the Abbé Thomas treated me as a stranger." Thus it happened that Restif returned to La Bretonne, and for a time resumed his work on the farm. His parents treated him with kindness and understanding, and bought some books for him to continue his studies, including a *Terence*, for which he had " begged most earnestly." Here he remained for some ten months, but his good father had decided that the boy's obvious aptitude for " book-learning " should not be wasted as a peasant or farm-worker, and was determined to apprentice him to some profession or honourable trade. It so happened that at this time when he and his parents were visiting Vermenton (where Restif had already stayed with a married half-sister, who lived there), they met a certain M. Fournier, a printer from Auxerre, who had married the eldest daughter of their friend M. Collet, Notary at Vermenton. It was suggested to the printer that he should take the boy as an apprentice, and this, on the recommendation of M. Collet, he agreed to do. And so it came about that at dawn one morning in July 1751 Restif, now nearly

[1] Nicolas Chorier was the author of *Meursius*, which was first printed in Latin in 1659. It appeared in French about 1680, as *L'Académie des Dames*, became the most famous erotic book of the early eighteenth century, and was reprinted many times. It is also known as *Aloysia* and *Dialogues de Luisa Sigea*.

seventeen, found himself on the way to Auxerre, his modest baggage on a donkey's back, his early start due to his parents' wish that he should complete his journey before the great heat of mid-day would make it irksome on the dry and dusty road.

This may be described as the transition from childhood to young manhood, from home and family influence to the larger world, and the beginning of another episode in the " Sentimental Journey " of Restif's life—that of " Madame Parangon," his master's wife. We can picture him, this summer's day, entering the charming old town on its hill above the River Yonne, which he thus describes on the occasion of his first sight of it some five years previously. " At the sight of Auxerre, which rises in the form of an amphitheatre upon a hill, I was struck with amazement, for until then I had only seen petty villages. We went on. I had never seen a bridge. Another surprise ! I trembled with emotion and with awe. We were going to lodge near the port,[1] and in crossing the town, my father took me past the Cathedral, which seemed to me the work of fairies. Saint Christopher terrified me ; but it recalled Nitry, Mont-Gré. I was enchanted by the clock and especially by the sphere of the months, like that at the Sorbonne in Paris. Everybody seemed well to do, and I commented on this in my own way : ' Is everyone a gentleman here ? ' And all the women looked pretty ; as is the way of children, I was dazzled by the fine dressing of these puppets." In the first illustrated edition of *Le Paysan Perverti* (1776), the first plate after the frontispiece, " Edmond arrivant a la Ville " (which, as we have seen, was executed under the careful direction of the author), is a delightful picture of Restif on arrival, with his donkey and a companion, admiring the beautiful old Tour de l'Horloge (1483) which he was soon to know so well, and which still stands to-day just as it did then, and is one of the most attractive things in Auxerre. A charming personal touch.

[1] On the River Yonne.

Restif arrived at Auxerre at eleven o'clock in the morning, and went to the house of M. Chabonnet, a friend of his father, who sent his son to show him the way to Fournier's house and take charge of the donkey which was to be returned to Sacy. The Fournier establishment was in the Rue de l'Horloge, near the famous Clock Tower and in front of the convent of the Cordeliers, to which entrance could be obtained by a narrow passage at the side of the house. In this passage was a door leading into the house, which actually was illegal, as a royal decree of 1728 had forbidden all printers' houses to have any entrances or exits otherwise than in the front, as doors at the back or sides favoured the dispersal of clandestine publications and editions. Actually, M. Fournier dealt in some of these, for Restif definitely says that his master found a certain clerk in the town named Durand useful to him " for smuggling in contraband books, as no other agent would undertake this." Whether these books were obscene or obnoxious to the authorities politically, he does not state.

Restif describes himself at this time as a youth of seventeen, impetuous, passionate, ardent, and of a lively conversation but also a curious shyness. He avoided society, in which he only remained when forced. At table, before strangers, he sat with lowered gaze, but carefully listened to what was said, and if addressed, replied in the briefest possible manner, blushing and without raising his eyes. His language was peculiar. He was free from the rude *patois* of Sacy, but under the influence of the books he had so ardently read, such as a French Bible of 1551, Amyot's *Plutarch*, and the *Old Lives of Saints and Martyrs*, he frequently used sixteenth-century expressions, which came to him naturally and gave a certain grace to his speech. He also had a remarkable memory. His sensitiveness was acute, his imagination excitable and quick to expand ; of considerable physical strength, and so fleet of foot that he could escape from any dogs that pursued him and of whom he had a con-

stant fear. He was neither big nor small, handsome nor ugly, his long hair was brown and curling. Under exceptionally thick eyebrows, his large eyes were deep blue and intelligent. An aquiline nose, a large mouth with sensual scarlet lips, women were attracted by his ardent youthfulness and something strange and agreeably mysterious in his manner.

The shy and sensitive boy, in the new brown suit that his mother had bought him and which gave him somewhat of a clerical air, received a cool welcome. M. Fournie , who had been so polite to him at Vermenton, when Restif went forward to greet him, merely said : " So it's you ? Mind you do your duty," and turned his back on him. When dinner was brought in, Madame Fournier's girl-cousin who was keeping house in the wife's absence, said to him : " Boy, go to the kitchen ! " and he went, without M. Fournier appearing even to notice him. Here he made the acquaintance of his fellow-prentice Boudard, who was a few months his senior, and the other workmen. Most of them slept on the second floor of the house. They teased and played practical jokes on the boy, who, from his shyness, they took to be a mere country lout. Being the junior of the establishment, he was at everybody's beck and call, and given all the dirtiest and most humiliating jobs to do. " So I began my career with my nose in the dirt, like a Paris dustman. Young Boudard, finding himself freed from the slavery of being bottom dog, joined the workmen in tormenting me." The coarseness and obscenity of their conversation astonished the country boy, as well as their openly-boasted intrigues with various girls of the town to whom he frequently had to write for them and then convey their love epistles, which were generally very indecent. In this respect, too, the master was no better than his men. M. Fournier, at this time a big man of forty-one, was a printer of considerable repute, and his work marks a notable advance upon that of his predecessors in Auxerre, of which place he is the best-known and most

celebrated of the old printers. He carried on his business there for forty years, and was highly thought of in the town. But, Restif declares, his amorous inclinations were insatiable. Though married for a second time, to a charming and pretty woman, fifteen years younger than himself, his eye was on every pretty girl, none of whom were safe from him in his own house, even if they happened to be relations of his wife or himself. We get an unattractive impression of him from Restif, but it is probable and understandable that this is really quite unjust.

Restif's apprenticeship was to last for four years. For the first three months he was acutely miserable, and thought he could hardly endure it, but he was determined to show his worth. And then, on his seventeenth birthday, Madame Fournier returned to her husband's house, from Paris. Marguerite Collet was at this time twenty-six years of age, nine years older than Restif. Pretty, attractive and charming in manner, she at once reminded the impressionable youth of his idol, Jeannette Rousseau. Naturally, he conceived a violent passion for her. He had previously seen her on a few occasions when staying with his married sister at Vermenton, and she had been present when her husband had agreed to take Restif as apprentice, and had added her recommendations to those of her father. The boy had admired her then, but only now did he get to know her really, and love for her was kindled in his inflammable heart. He describes her as follows: "Imagine a tall woman admirably proportioned (she was actually only 5 feet and 4 inches in height, but her dignity and the noble carriage of her head made her appear taller, while leaving her all the dainty graces of medium stature); a face wherein beauty blended with nobility and majesty was tempered by the enticing prettiness peculiar to Frenchwomen; a pale complexion warmed by animation; fine silky hair, ash-blond; well-marked and well-arched eyebrows, almost black; admirable blue eyes, whereof the long and veiling lashes gave

her that modest, that angelic air which is beauty's greatest charm. Her voice was shy and sweet, with sonorous cadences to touch the heart ; her walk voluptuous yet modest ; her beautiful rounded breasts were almost shoulder-high ; her hands soft without being plump ; a perfect arm ; a leg as beautiful as the most perfect youth's and the daintiest foot in shape and size ever possessed by pretty woman. She dressed with exquisite and much admired taste ; to the simplest clothes she lent the conquering charm of Venus's cincture, which no one can resist. She could have made the most fantastic stuffs a fashion. Her affable and winning manner was the most attractive of her qualities and endeared her to those whose sex did not compel to adoration." This divinity Restif christened and always wrote of as " Madame Parangon," and her husband therefore became Monsieur Parangon, and we will follow his example. The word " parangon " is a term used in printing for a certain kind of type, and in jewellery for a diamond, pearl or precious stone without blemish, and of course, in the ordinary sense is " paragon," a model or standard of excellence, perfect of its kind.

Their meeting was of the pleasantest. " Come here, Monsieur Nicolas," she said. " You are a son of one of my father's friends, and deserve to be ours too. My husband is satisfied with you and so is the foreman. You will understand how much that pleases me since it was I who suggested this apprenticeship to your parents. I had heard something about your little differences with your brothers : possibly you were very much in the wrong. But you are young ; and it seems that youth must commit follies in order the more certainly to learn wisdom." She was smiling as she spoke and looking for something, and then she drew out a silver watch and gave it to him saying : " A good workman such as you will want to know the time ; keep it ! " Here was tact and charm. What a contrast to his first reception at the house ! No wonder the boy was at her feet. " I did not

know what to do," he says. " A watch for me ! I was overjoyed by the present itself, but still more because it came from Madame Parangon. My emotion was manifest in my thanks, which were so extravagant and so inconsequent that they made her smile."

Order was everywhere restored in the house after the return of Mme. Parangon, and life was made much pleasanter for Restif. He no longer had his meals in the kitchen, but in the room with the family. He was given a better bedroom and was relieved of many of his more irksome tasks. The workmen regarded him in quite a different light. He was now respected as the son of Madame's friends, and instead of the familiar form of address of " thee " and " thou," he was once again called " Monsieur Nicolas." But things had begun to improve even before Mme. Parangon's return. Her remarks about her husband and the foreman contained some truth. Restif's obvious intelligence, astonishing memory, knowledge of Latin and general adaptability had had their effect, especially upon the foreman and the more serious workmen, and even M. Parangon had had to admit (grudgingly, according to Restif) his willingness, conscientiousness, and ability. Moreover, the master's private room was heated by charcoal in a big china stove, and here the newly-printed sheets were placed to dry, wherefore Restif had the right of entry there. In this room was M. Parangon's own library, which included many romances (and which, according to Restif, the owner had never read). The book-loving youth took full advantage of this opportunity to read them, and amongst others, he devoured all the works of Madame de Villedieu, a writer of the seventeenth century, a contemporary and precursor of Madame de la Fayette, and whose romances of gallantry and scandal, such as *Le Grand Alcandre*, *Alcidamie*, *Les Amours des Grands Hommes* and *Les Désordres de l'Amour* may be said to somewhat resemble those of the English Mrs. Aphra Behn, another contemporary. Most of Mme. de Villedieu's romances are written in the form

of letters, as likewise are so many of Restif's own, but this may at least equally show the influence of Richardson (of which more hereafter), though the form, of course, was a generally prevailing fashion in the eighteenth century. Anyhow, these amorous stories created a great impression on the boy. But after the return of Mme. Parangon, and by her inspiration, he considerably widened his reading. M. Parangon was by way of being a bookseller as well as a printer, and also had a lending library, so the boy made the most of the facilities thus provided. " I began to educate myself by a perusal of the (French) classics. I never wasted a moment of my time, but was always working, translating, reading or performing my duties." Sundays, holidays and many evenings, he spent most of his time in reading. He now read Molière, Corneille, Boileau, La Fontaine, Racine : Racine above all. The first play of this author he read was *Phèdre*. It impressed him tremendously. " I had opened the book at random one evening, and the last play in it caught my eye. I turned to the beginning of the play and still standing, as I was when I took it to the light, I read it in one breath. I devoured his ten other tragedies." Racine remained a potent influence with him. He himself was also translating his first love, Terence. Mme. Parangon encouraged him by getting him to read aloud to her, and at her request, he read her the first two acts of his own translation of the *Andria*, as well as many of the French classics. Restif read well ; his voice was soft in sound and pleasant in its inflexions, sonorous, warm and caressing, and he read with expression and feeling. This is confirmed by the fact that, some years later, the Director of the Opera-comique in Paris, charmed by his voice, offered him an engagement. Mme. Parangon asked him about his reading. " What do you read for amusement ? " " Mme. Villedieu's romances enchant me ; but I prefer the *Princesse de Clèves*. I find *Don Quixote* tedious, though some of the episodes are charming." " You never read books that are at all . . . free ? " He blushed and replied :

" I have read La Fontaine's *Contes*. Once I had put my nose into the book I could not leave off. I was carried away." " That is wrong. We must learn self-mastery. If I had my way, there would be no such books in the place. Besides, I have heard M. Parangon himself say that books of that sort blunt the taste, and that those addicted to them find serious and decent books insipid." " Oh, Madame, that is not true of everyone," he cried, with an eagerness which amused the lady, " because I enjoy good books as much as ever. I even feel a sort of contempt for licentious authors, such as Grécourt and Vergier, whom I have read also." " You would do well to read no more of such authors." " Yes, Madame. I am going to concentrate on translating the Latin poets, and reading the best French ones, such as Racine and Boileau." One day, shortly after this edifying conversation, she made him read Voltaire's *Zaïre* aloud to her. He was unacquainted with this author, as his works were not in the house, but Mme. Parangon had seen this play in Paris during her last visit, and was " still under the spell of *Zaïre* and Gaussin." [1] Just as he had finished, Manon Bourgoin, Mme. Parangon's most intimate friend, came in. " I am still quite overcome," said Mme. Parangon. " Monsieur Nicolas has just been reading me *Zaïre*." " He reads well ? " " With great feeling." " That's good. Let us see how you read, Monsieur Nicolas." She took up a little quarto volume : it was *Le Cid*, and she opened at the monologue of Don Diego : " O Fury and Despair ! Old age, I hate you ! " I had read this play, says Restif, which, in my then opinion, was the best of Corneille's, and I knew the monologue by heart, and could deliver it with great expression. Mme. Bourgoin was delighted. " He shall read us the six cantos of a little poem in manuscript which my father has just received. There are to be eighteen, but we have only six as yet. It is by the same author as *Zaïre*." It was Voltaire's *La*

[1] Voltaire's tragedy had been produced originally in 1732. The famous actress, Mlle. Gaussin, had made a tremendous success in the title-rôle.

Pucelle ! Mme. Parangon did not approve. But the reading was interrupted.

As Restif grew older and more accustomed to his surroundings, he found other amusements and divertisements for his spare time, besides reading. " I was beginning to like the town, and trembled at the thought of leaving it ! And I must reveal the reason, dear, honest reader : it was that I was desirous of women rather than for one woman ; more amorous of the sex than of any member of it, however charming ; and I perceived many opportunities in my new life for the satisfaction of a craving which grew daily stronger." This did not detract from his worship of Mme. Parangon ; he regarded her as being on an entirely different plane, and at present, as quite out of his reach. It was the many pretty girls that he saw in Auxerre that he was thinking of and who appealed to his sensibility. " I did everything I could to overcome my passion for Mme. Parangon, to drive her from my heart by putting another in her place. I did this because my heart's idol was married, and to desire another's wife seemed to me the crime most contrary to morals. I sought out girls who were free and forced myself to become attached to them."

During the next two or three years, Restif had love-affairs of varying degree with many girls in Auxerre, such as, for instance (amongst others), Madelon Baron, " the most lovable of girls, the tenderest, the most voluptuous " ; Emilie Laloge, a young Parisian, " the most delicate, the prettiest of the belles I knew in my youth. It was she, of all my mistresses, who afforded me the most romantic, the most fairy-like experiences " ; Manon Prudhot, " fresh, slim, as one is at fifteen. She entranced me " ; Edmée Servigné, " the living image of Jeannette Rousseau." He wrote verses to them, the more respectable of which he sent to them. He also began to write a long poem entitled *Le Séjour des Graces*, in which he intended to celebrate the charms of about forty young girls of Auxerre who attracted him. Of these girls, Madelon Baron

inspired perhaps the most serious affection in him. With Mme. Parangon already married, and Jeannette Rousseau remaining the idol of his heart, to be worshipped from afar, he was so attracted by Madelon that he seriously contemplated marrying her, and Mme. Parangon encouraged the match. But when Restif was eighteen and a half, to everyone's regret the poor girl suddenly died. He always revered her memory, and declared that the whole course of his life would have been different if she had lived.

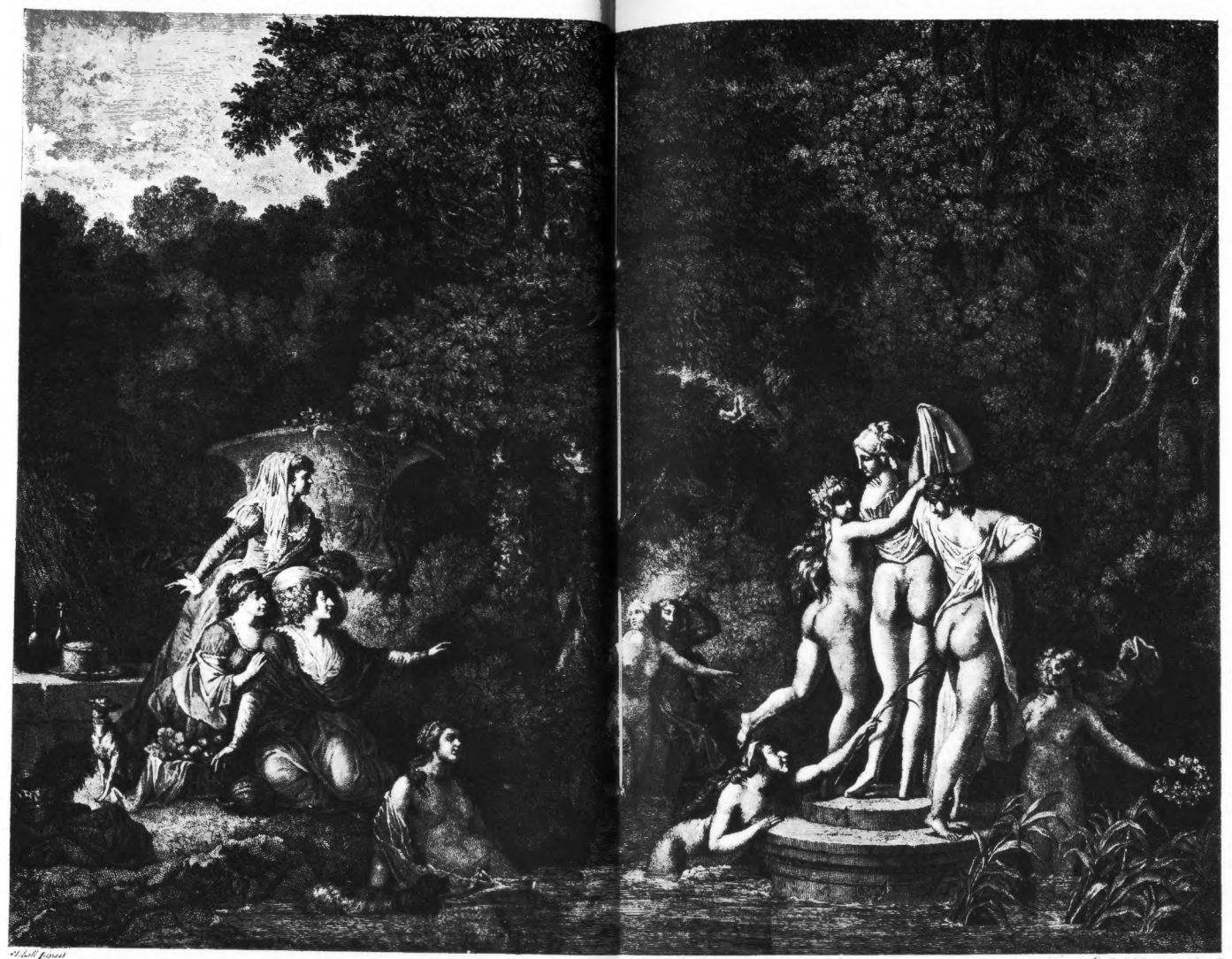
But before this, when he was not quite eighteen, another incident occurred which was to have considerable influence upon Restif's life. One evening, he was alone in the house. " It was past ten and no one had come in, when there was a knock at the shop door. I ran to open it. There I found a Cordelier [1] whom I knew by sight, and also by repute as a good fellow though something of a rake. He had no frock, but just his tunic, and was covered with dust and sweat, a terrible sight ! " It was Gaudet d'Arras. He had been caught in an amorous encounter, and had made his escape, leaving his frock behind him. He was supposed to be in his room at the Convent, and could not face the Porter at the main door, with whom he was on bad terms, and especially without his frock, as that would have given him away and got him into very serious trouble. He therefore asked Restif to let him go through the shop and out by the back door into the cloister, where there was a little door into the Convent of which Gaudet had a key. He also asked him to keep his secret. Restif not only did all this, but early next morning retrieved the friar's frock and restored it to him in the Convent without discovery, thus saving him from disgrace. And in this way began the friendship between the two. Gaudet invited the boy to meals in his room in the Convent, with Brother Saint-Hermine, an extremely good-looking and effeminate young friar, and they became great friends. This Gaudet — whom Restif called

[1] i.e. : a Franciscan friar.

" D'Arras " to distinguish him from another friend of his who was also named Gaudet (called " de Varzi "), was a young man of good family who had been forced to become a monk against his will, at the age of sixteen. His one desire now was to renounce his vows and become a layman again. Of pleasing appearance and charming manners, he was a man of the most abandoned morals and subversive principles, but with much intellectual power. One of his principal tenets was the absolute right to pleasure and to enjoyment by any and every means. He believed neither in God nor in the immortality of the soul. According to him, pleasure, happiness and sensual enjoyments were the highest aim of life. The boy listened to him first with astonishment, then with avidity. This was the extreme opposite, daring and seductive, to the strict and narrow teachings of his Jansenist brothers. He easily fell very much under the friar's influence, and Gaudet became the veritable Mephistopheles to the youthful and impressionable Restif—his evil genius, in fact. This is shown even more clearly and with greater force in the novel, *Le Paysan Perverti* than in the autobiography, *Monsieur Nicolas*. In the former, Gaudet is indeed a titanic figure of evil, who corrupts the young Edmond as the real Gaudet did Restif, and to an even greater degree. We shall have more to say on this point in the discussion of Restif's literary work. Anyhow, from now on, they aided each other in their numerous amorous intrigues, in which the elder encouraged the younger, and took a perverse delight in doing so.

Up to the time when Restif was just turned nineteen he had not yet learned to dance. But now, " when the time of mourning for Madelon was over, Mme. Baron began to give small informal dances again, and I was ashamed that I could not go." So he went to a dancing-master. " He was one of the Dutch taken prisoner at Fontenoy and at Bergopzoom, of whom several thousand settled in France. He taught me the first principles one by one. I soon acquired a fondness for dancing that degenerated

into a passion. In the morning I longed for the end of the day to come, so that I could dance. So a new order of things began. Up to then I had only visited the tradespeople in the town or honest folk in easy circumstances, such as those in our own house. In the ballrooms I mixed with quite a different society, daughters of artisans, working girls and others who enjoyed considerable freedom. I was introduced to a number of girls belonging to the commonality, of whom some were very pretty, and to young men of the same class. This caused a complete metamorphosis in myself. Till then sedate and modest, I became giddy, dissipated, and a vulgar fop (not, however, with my old, respectable acquaintances, but with my new ones). Thus I belonged to two circles : I passed the day among my usual companions of both sexes, and the evenings, after supper, among the dancers of the ballroom." He mentions the girls whom he most frequently met at these dances, and some of the youths, and then gives the following interesting and delightful particulars : " The gatherings in the ballrooms were quiet, and the dancing was never disturbed by quarrels as at Paris. Country dances only began when everyone present had danced the minuet. Each man was entitled to two minuets for his penny, or one minuet and any other dance, for two or for one, that he thought suitable ; for if there was no one present who knew the dance he asked for, the wife or daughter of the proprietor acted as his partner. It was the men who chose their partners, so that it was possible for a girl to get no dancing at all. However, this never happened. The proprietor kept his eyes open, and tactfully persuaded any man who had not yet led out a woman, to dance two more minuets with the neglected girl, or made one of his own pupils partner her. We danced in turn according to the time when we arrived. The dancing-master had ivory dice, similar to those used in loto, only square, and he gave number one to the first arrival, and so on in order. After the last country dance we handed back our dice with two sous, or four sous, if we



La Comparaison.

were paying for our partner. It is obvious that this amusement was not ruinous ; for four or eight sous, one could dance after dinner and after supper, with a number of pretty girls and young men ; and, when the dancing was over, one could make up a party for a picnic. In summer-time, we used to go to the Saint-Martin suburb on the road to Vaux, and eat cream cheese and salads fresh from the garden, washed down with excellent white wine cooled in the stream of Vancres, flowing beneath trees the branches of which formed a delicious arbour. There we used to play *Trou-Madame*, and *Siam* and *Boule*, etc.[1] In winter we went to the pastry-cook pork-butcher eating-houses, such as Sanglé, Julien and Chavagny, where we ate five-sous pies, sausages, ham, game and fricasseed chicken, etc." Such were the simple pleasures of the ordinary youth of a small provincial French town in the eighteenth century !

Restif quickly became a first-rate dancer, and his teacher was proud of him. " My dancing made me a welcome partner and one sought after by all the best dancers ; I became the hero of the ballroom I frequented ; my entrance caused a flutter in the assembly ; a girl was flattered when I asked her to be my partner, and if it was for a minuet, she made it a long one." Of course, these dancing evenings led to several more love intrigues.

There was also a theatre in Auxerre to which Restif went. The plays given were of an edifying and semi-religious nature, for the austere Jansenist Bishop of the diocese would not allow anything of a profane nature to be performed. Restif saw his first theatrical spectacle soon after his eighteenth birthday. It was of the type of the old morality plays, a religious drama in which the Adoration of the Magi was one of the chief scenes.

But during all this time, his passion for Mme. Parangon grew more violent—the other amours were but distractions. Naturally, she seems to have been to some extent

[1] *Trou-Madame* was the same as the English " Nine-holes," *Siam* a kind of " Ninepins," and *Boule* = " Bowls."

aware of his feelings towards her, and indeed, it could not have been otherwise, after an incident that occurred when he was nineteen. M. Parangon was away from home, and it so happened that Restif had supper alone with his mistress. This was actually brought about by Gaudet d'Arras, who had caused the foreman and the others who, in the ordinary way, would have been present, to be kept to supper at the place they had gone to, where he also was. An invitation had also been sent to Mme. Parangon, but Gaudet had prevented the servant from bringing it. Gaudet had already worked Restif up to a considerable pitch of nervous excitement and anticipation, by making such remarks, in a joking way, as " Now we have a beautiful widow here ! " and saying that the husband's absence was Restif's opportunity for attaining his desires.

After supper, Restif and Mme. Parangon sat and talked, and he read some of *Phèdre* to her again. It was winter, at which season the master and mistress slept in the parlour, for the sake of warmth. As he was retiring to his own room, Restif thought he heard a noise in the downstairs back room. He entered, and there found Gaudet, who had a key to it, and who had come to see how his " pupil " was progressing. Gaudet proceeded to tell Restif a long tale about another girl, which was of so licentious a nature that it inflamed the boy's desires still further. When he eventually retired to his room he was in a state of almost frenzy. " I was burning. I reflected on what I could do in M. Parangon's absence ; on my conversation with Mme. Parangon ; on the reading of *Phèdre ;* on all that Gaudet had pictured to me, on the phrase *A beautiful widow.*" He returned downstairs, clad only in his shirt. " When I reached the parlour door, which did not lock on the inside, I turned the handle so slowly that it made no noise at all. I entered, and shut it with the same precaution. Guided by the feeble light of a night lamp, I went to her bed and knelt beside it, I sought to touch her. She woke up and stretched out her

hand, saying ' Puss, puss ! . . . who is there ? ' Then after a moment's thought, she called : ' Toinette ? Toinette ? ' (her maid). I lay flat on my belly and, although her arm was stretched in my direction, it did not reach me. If she had touched me, what would have happened ? I still shudder at the thought ! She might have taken me for a thief, and been dangerously frightened ; she might have cried out, or rung the bell ! The others, who by then had come back and retired, would have run to her ; I should have been found, and I would have been ruined for ever. She covered herself up again. I waited until I knew from her breathing that she was asleep, and then I tried to kiss her. But I could not manage it ; owing to her position I should have woken her. I felt that I must get away without making an attempt in which it was obvious I should not be abetted : it was mad, impracticable. I reopened the door, and shut it again so slowly that I did not make a sound. There was much to show that she had heard me, for she gave me time to get upstairs again before ringing for Toinette, who slept in the kitchen which was separated from the living-room by a part of the courtyard. She said nothing to Toinette, but made her sleep in her room for the remainder of the night." Restif got into bed, trembling after his escapade. As he was at last about to go to sleep, someone entered his room and got into bed with him. In the dim light he distinguished the outline of a young person of Mme. Parangon's height and figure. He knew not who it was, and only after she had left him did he realise that it was " the appetising chambermaid on the second floor," who had been sent to him by Gaudet, so that he should not be disappointed, and in the hope that he would think she was Mme. Parangon ! Whatever she knew or suspected, Mme. Parangon said nothing to anyone next day about what had happened in the night, but she asked a girl-friend to come and sleep with her for the rest of the time that M. Parangon was away.

There had also been another incident, earlier than this.

One day, coming out of church after Mass, Restif met Gaudet, who related to him, with lascivious details, an adventure he had recently had with two chambermaids. His thoughts occupied with this, he says, " on returning home to work, I saw Mme. Parangon elegantly dressed ; her tongued shoes were rose-coloured with a green border and green heels, and fastened with a pretty paste ornament. Either, being new, they were not quite comfortable, or else perhaps she wanted to save them after having worn them at High Mass ; at any rate she changed them for equally seductive green slippers trimmed with pink and with pink heels. I stood devouring her with my eyes. Toinette put her mistress's shoes on a little table by the door and the two went up to the first floor, telling me to wait till they came down again. Distracted by the fiercest passion, my worship of Mme. Parangon, I seemed to see and touch her as I fingered the shoes she had discarded. I pressed my lips to one of these jewels, while the other, in my excessive exaltation, betrayed nature and its own sacred purpose, and played a woman's part. . . . I cannot speak more plainly. . . . Her warmth still lay about the lifeless object she had touched . . . a mist covered my eyes. My passion calmed, I took one of the shoes that had excited this perverse outburst and wrote *I adore you* in small letters upon it, and then replaced the pretty toys where I had found them. In spite of my quick ears, I did not notice that someone came into the room in the midst of my abandonment and stood almost beside me. The innocent Toinette had seen me, but not understanding in the least what I was doing, had gone up again quietly to tell her mistress. Mme. Parangon came down in surprise, but happily only at the moment when I was writing the inscription. A slight noise made me retreat to the courtyard and, while I was away, they must have read what I had written, for I caught a glimpse of Toinette's skirt as I came in again, and the shoes had plainly been moved." The boy's passion for Mme. Parangon was such that he kissed with rapture everything

which belonged to her that he could find. " One day in particular, finding myself in the place where she used modestly to put away her soiled linen, I seized greedily upon all that had been in contact with her charms. I pressed my lips to it in a transport which cannot be described."

Though Mme. Parangon then must have had a fairly good idea of the passion she inspired in the youthful apprentice, she appears to have treated the matter with discretion, and shown tact in her everyday relationship with him. That she liked him, probably both for himself and on account of his being the son of her father's friend, is evident from the fact that she suggested and tried to effect a marriage between him and her much younger sister, Fanchette. She also probably thought that it would steady him down and divert his desires from herself. Restif had seen Fanchette at Vermenton, when she was a child, and was flattered by the idea that Mme. Parangon should conceive such a project and wish him to be allied to her family.

But Gaudet d'Arras was still a potent influence upon him. We have seen that he was in the background of, and to some extent responsible for, the two incidents related above. In the young Restif he found an apt pupil for his vicious teachings. He encouraged him and stimulated him in his lustful desires and helped him in his sensual love affairs. In his room he showed him indecent pictures, and in private instructed him in debauchery. Restif read to him the more obscene of the verses he composed. And above all, he encouraged the baser side of the boy's passion for Mme. Parangon. " I liked d'Arras and saw a good deal of him ; he and the other Gaudet were the friends who shared my heart. But the former had the advantage of experience and was my mentor. I was led insensibly to confide to him the state of my affections. He was an attentive listener ; he saw how innocent was my heart and took my training in hand. He warned me to shun romantic passions which could

only make me unhappy, and added : ' The only way to avoid being enslaved and submerged by women is to possess the ones you love. Thus you change parts with them and, master of your own feelings, become impervious to that excessive perturbation which they foster. Instead of being dependent on women, they will depend on you. You will be their master and all the more loved for that.' He illustrated his point from people we knew in the town," and from himself. And with regard to Mme. Parangon, the tempter spoke to him in this vein : " My friend, she is better than a maid. There is no fear of consequences. Venture, when the opportunity comes ; venture, I repeat, and confidently. Perhaps, at the bottom of her heart, she is vexed that you are so bashful ; even the best of women likes at least to take a pride in her fall. Have you any right to take the nobler part for yourself, and deny a fair lady the credit of resisting you. That is not generous. It is not even polite ! Court a rebuff, and at least you will show that you feel and are alive. A woman always either glories in her resistance, or is content to fall. Give her one of these pleasures, or both at the same time ! It is cruel, inhuman, to refuse everything to a woman so worthy to have all gifts lavished upon her." The seed thus scattered fell upon fertile soil.

On Sunday, March 24th, 1754 (Restif says 26th, which is an error) when he was nineteen-and-a-half, Restif was alone in the house in the late afternoon, engaged upon his translation of Terence, when Mme. Parangon returned. After conversing with him for a while she went upstairs to put some yarn away, and, in a few moments, called to him to help her. She was standing on a chair, and he began to hand her the bundles of yarn. And then suddenly he was overcome by his violent passion. The scene is too long to quote, but his object was all but attained by force. Protestations and struggles against his frenzy but increased his desire. Then suddenly reaction and remorse. He was on his knees before her, begging forgiveness. He carried her gently downstairs and laid

her on the sofa. A long talk followed, during which they were both reduced to tears. At last she consented to forgive him, and retired to bed before the others returned. She did not appear for supper that evening, on the plea that she was indisposed, and she said not a word to anyone of what had taken place. The whole household was anxious about her, but next day she said she was better, and came downstairs mid-day to dinner, looking very pale. Restif was penitent and filled with remorse. Three days later they had a long conversation together during a walk, and Mme. Parangon talked to him like a mother. " Unhappily I have acquired the right to speak to you frankly," she said.

From this time onward, their intimacy decreased. They seldom met alone. One day, Mme. Parangon said to Restif: " Do not work too hard. You are fond of dancing ; go, then, and dance ; you must ; I ask you to. It is my wish." " I obeyed," he says, " and went back to my friends of the ballroom, whom I had deserted absolutely for more than a month. I began insensibly to amuse myself too much." And so the months passed. In August 1754, Mme. Parangon went to Paris again and did not return till the following January. Meanwhile, Restif had many more love affairs and intimacies with various girls, such as Mlle. Colombe, a draper's daughter, " very tall, and the biggest of my mistresses. She was very kind-hearted " ; Tonton Lenclos, " a libertine, and the first that I knew of that kind " ; Toinette, Mme. Parangon's maid, " good-looking, honest, true, sensible and worthy of being the maid and friend of her mistress " ; Rose Lambelin, to whom at one time he wrote verses every day, " a tall girl, witty, agreeable, but lacking that knowledge of the human heart which is only gained by experience " ; Marote Baron, younger sister of the dead Madelon, " pretty and charming " ; Marianne Tangis, a butcher's daughter, " a masterpiece of sweetness, naïvety, frankness and feeling." Indeed, Restif gives what he calls a " little census " of his twenty natural children which he

alleges he had got before he was twenty-one years old, the mothers of whom include all these girls, as well as those previously mentioned, with the exception of the maid, Toinette. But we need not take this seriously, especially as he includes Mme. Parangon in the list, which we know to be false. It is only an example of his mania for paternity, which will be discussed later. Also, when he was a little over twenty, we get the first instance of his hearing of one of his supposed daughters, then aged about seven.

In November 1754, Restif caught his last glimpse of Jeannette Rousseau, who one day passed the door with her mother and brother. He thought her looking more attractive than ever, and his emotion was so overpowering that he could not bring himself to go out of the shop. He was never to see her again.

On May 8th, 1755, when he was twenty-and-a-half years old, Restif completed his apprenticeship. M. Parangon released him some four months in advance of his full time, owing to his proficiency. His parents came to Auxerre for the occasion. Next day, " M. Parangon came upstairs to declare me journeyman printer, at the same time instructing my fellow prentices to call me *Monsieur* in the future. I mention these trifles to depict the usages of the profession as they were still preserved in the provinces. But these customs are dying out everywhere now ; and, indeed, one would be ashamed to use them with the brutes who have since debased the art of typography." It was the custom for apprentices to live in the house of their master, but when they attained full status they were expected to leave. Restif continued for a short time to take his meals with the Parangons. On July 11th, however, he went to live with two cousins who had both recently married and come to live in one house in Auxerre. Here he had a pleasant little room overlooking the garden. But he was not to stay there long.

There is a mystery concerning Restif's departure from Auxerre. According to his own account, early in August

1755 he went home to Sacy for a short time, to escape the consequences of a " duel," regarding which he tells a fantastic story. He returned to Auxerre on August 30th, on his way to Paris, where he had now decided to go, to follow his trade of printer. He was still regarded as the fiancé of Fanchette, Mme. Parangon's young sister, who had recently been in Auxerre with her father. He left Auxerre again on September 1st, travelling by boat on the river, and arrived in Paris on the third of that month. In *Monsieur Nicolas* he gives a glowing description of his farewells—especially that with Mme. Parangon, whom he was never to see again—and of his being seen off on his departure by many friends, all of which is entirely imaginary. At the end of *Le Drame de la Vie* he printed a poem, addressed to Mme. Parangon, which he began to write on July 15th, 1755, and continued to write, at dated intervals, until November 30th, following. At the head of this poem is a significant sentence. " I began these verses when Mme. Parangon still loved me, and only finished them when, overwhelmed by her severity, I avoided it by flight in the month of August." We learn from this poem that at the beginning of August 1755 there had been a scene between him and Mme. Parangon, in which she, who had always shown the most charitable and touching indulgence towards him, and even after his attempt upon herself, had forgiven him, now, on finding out his relations with Marianne Tangis, the butcher's daughter, called him " perfidious, inconstant and flighty," and declared that he was not fit to be the future husband of her young sister, Fanchette, and that she henceforth " took from me her heart." The rest of the poem describes his grief at losing Mme. Parangon, under whose displeasure he left Auxerre. But is this any truer than the other version? It may be, but Mme. Parangon had known of his relationships with other girls, and said nothing, and there does not appear to have been any particular reason why she should have taken offence to this one. Actually, his flight from Auxerre was sudden

and precipitate, and the reason for it is not known. "A very small enigma," says M. Tabarant, "but an enigma all the same, and one that I judge to be impenetrable." It is, indeed, this part of Restif's autobiography that carries the least conviction. Several errors in it have been proved, and these were obviously deliberate. The attempt upon Mme. Parangon's virtue is one of the most celebrated episodes in eighteenth-century *galanté* literature, but there is much that is mystifying and unconvincing about it, and the long conversation between the two immediately afterwards is too highly dramatised—or rather "novelised"—to ring true. It strikes a purely artificial note. Restif says that Mme. Parangon did not love her husband, and that they had no children. As a matter of fact, they had no less than six. At the time of Restif's assault, Mme. Parangon had already had five children, and was five months pregnant with a sixth. He mentions towards the end of his apprenticeship signs of her ill-health. She died in little more than two years after he left Auxerre, on December 28th, 1757, at the age of thirty-two, though Restif gives a different date, which is wrong. He also gives her age and that of her husband wrongly, making her four years younger than she actually was. M. and Mme. Parangon appear to have led the usual life of an ordinary married couple, with the normal relationships existing between them. His portrait of M. Parangon as a coarse, violent and rather brutal man and almost a sex maniac is without confirmation, and was probably inspired by the jealousy which he admits he harboured for him. Altogether, there is much about the Parangons, man and wife, in *Monsieur Nicolas*, *Le Paysan et la Paysanne Pervertis* and *Le Drame de la Vie* which is doubtful, and some that is definitely false.

Again, with regard to Gaudet d'Arras Restif states that this friar was released from his vows in 1755, and henceforth wore ordinary dress; that he married Manon Bourgoin, Mme. Parangon's most intimate friend, and that they went to live in a town in Flanders, where he

afterwards became a parliamentary councillor ; that he and Restif corresponded for a time, but eventually ceased ; that Gaudet recognised Restif's identity when he began to write, and was on his way to Paris, to " rescue " him, two months after the *Paysan* was published in 1776, but fell ill at Valenciennes, and died at a village two leagues from there. The truth is that the real Gaudet d'Arras died still a monk, was therefore unmarried, and was buried in the nave of the Church of the Minorites in Auxerre on March 28th, 1763. Moreover, Manon Bourgoin never left Auxerre.

But it must not be inferred from this that *Monsieur Nicolas*, as a whole, lacks veracity. Quite the contrary. I feel convinced that it is remarkably truthful. The conversations, naturally, are not in the actual words, but convey the sense and meaning of what was said on those occasions.

Restif was enabled to verify his facts and refresh his memory from the voluminous note-books which he began to keep in 1753, when he was nineteen years old, and continued for the rest of his life. Some of these were destroyed by his vindictive mother-in-law in 1760, and for the period covered by those he frequently laments the fact that he cannot give an exact date or remember some minor details of the event he is describing. But he was enabled to write his autobiography and maintain a high level of veracity therein, with the help of his note-books. Naturally, there are a few inaccuracies in that long book written some forty years after his Auxerre period, a few of which are intentional, others accidental or inevitable. But on the whole, his story rings remarkably true.

We have now, then, reached the period of his departure from Auxerre, and his arrival in Paris, where he was to live mainly for the rest of his long life. Instead of pictures of the country and a provincial town, we now have scenes of life in the capital. This, indeed, was to be an entirely new world to him, and the change marks another milestone on the road of his chequered existence.

III

LIFE. 1755—1789

ON September 3rd, 1755, Restif arrived in Paris. For the rest of his life—that is to say, for the next fifty years—he was to leave it but seldom, and then only for short periods. The " atmosphere " of his life was changed. " Paris now became my home," he says, " and with my first glimpse of the buildings my heart contracted. Did I foresee what was to befall me there ? "

The span of his residence in Paris covers one of the most interesting periods in the history of the city, during which great social changes occurred, and Restif has left us the most vivid and interesting pictures of the every-day life of the streets and the proletariate there that we possess. At this arrival, it was still the Paris of the Ancien Régime ; Louis XV was to reign for nearly another nineteen years. Then came the troublous times of Louis XVI and the upheaval of the Revolution, to be followed by the transitions of the Directoire and the Consulate to the Empire of Napoleon. Could one imagine a more interesting period ? Of the political side Restif tells us but little, which is all to the good, as we have more than enough of it in the multitudinous other memoirs and writings of the time. But on the social side and every-day life of the common people, nobody, not even Louis Sebastien Mercier in his delightful *Tableau de Paris* and *Nouveau Tableau* (which Restif quotes with approbation), has left us such lively and detailed descriptions. Of the Court, the Nobility, and what was called " Society," of the amours and intrigues and scandals of the Upper Classes, we have a surfeit which becomes monotonous, even boring. But there is only one Restif. He is unique. It has been well said by Professor F. C. Green that " the chief interest of Restif's work lies in its realistic and detailed picture of

the manners of the people, both urban and rural. From this point of view, all his novels are documents in spite of their moral and didactic pretensions, and they offer to the historian valuable information about the social and economic life of the masses on the eve of the Revolution."

Henceforth, I propose to reduce somewhat the scale of treatment of Restif's personal life. I have dealt with his youth and adolescence at considerable length, as it appears to me that these are the important and impressionable years in the formation of his character, where we find the seeds that were to grow and develop into the personality of the later man and writer.

On his arrival in Paris, Restif went to stay with his prettiest sister Marie and her husband. The following day he sought out Boudard, his former fellow-apprentice at Auxerre, who was now working as a printer in the Galeries du Louvre, or Royal Printing House. " He had been good for little but mischief when I had known him, and I was not depending on him much," says Restif. " So it was with some surprise that I found a lad six feet tall, grave and judicious of manner, kindly of speech and, most important of all, of an obliging nature. He welcomed me with a brother's tenderness, and took possession of me, at once, promising to introduce me to a good printer. He was boarding with Mme. Lallemand, the pretty wife of a colleague, and he found me a room in the same house." In a short time Boudard had succeeded in getting Restif employment in the same place as himself. They left their lodgings as being too far from their work, and lived together at the Hotel du Sainte-Esprit in the Rue des Poulies with one Chambon, a clock-maker, who also had recently come from Auxerre. This arrangement worked well. " By the nature of his occupation, Chambon would be at home while we were at work and this would make it easy for us to arrange our meals : a *pot-au-feu* every other day and a roast from the baker's in the evening. We shared the housekeeping between us ; Boudard, as the most experienced, bought the meat at

the butcher's ; I took it to the bakehouse, and told the cook when we would be ready for it ; also I bought the vegetables, the charcoal and the wood. Chambon put the *pot-au-feu* on the fire, and watched it ; we washed up once a week, on Sunday after dinner." A real *vie de bohème !* They spent three francs a week each on their food, which left them twelve to put aside. And here we get an interesting glimpse of labour conditions at the time. " A workman only earned fifty sous a day at the Royal Printing Works, the other fifty of the hundred allotted by the Government went into the Director's pocket ; and as he made us work for him privately as well he amassed an immense fortune. This man was one of the Anissons of Lyons, and married his daughter, or rather a dowry of 1,500,000 francs together with a trousseau worth 400,000 francs, to the Marquis de Lambert. The Marquise's brother has since taken his father's place as Director. He is a fool, and avaricious to the point of cruelty : he has turned the Imprimerie Royale (now Imprimerie Nationale) into a jail, wherein the workmen are shut up to be released like animals at feeding time. If the father made about four millions, his son should make ten by his methods of conducting business. But why are the workmen so servile as to let themselves be muzzled by the tyranny of contemptible underlings ? They were free in my time : my neck is not scarred by the chains of slavery ! " But retribution was to come, and Restif added the following note after the Revolution : " Things have greatly changed since then. Anisson mounted the guillotine in 1794, and the workmen have become intolerably insolent. *Medio tutissimus ibis.*" [1]

For the first few months after he arrived in Paris, Restif lived a very quiet life. " Time hung heavy on my hands, and I was very unhappy. I knew no one ; I had lost all my taste for study with my change of residence, so I fell back on my work, and that was the limit of my activities. I began to live like a machine, working all the week and

[1] Ovid : *Metamorphoses*, ii, 137.

resting on Sunday. With my arrival in Paris, or a little while before that, began those twelve years of my life during which I neither developed my mind nor furthered my career. Those twelve disastrous years, which I completely lost, decided my fate and my place in life. So I moped and never went out to enjoy myself, although I had had a black suit made for the purpose. But I had not yet discovered the theatres, so I stayed in our room while my fellow-boarders went out to amuse themselves. My sweetest occupation was to go over in my note-books all that had happened in the preceding years, and to recall my pleasantest times and those whom I had loved." By " those twelve disastrous years which I completely lost " Restif means the years between the ending of his apprenticeship and the beginning of his career as author by the publication of his first book in 1767.

But early in 1756 things began to alter. Two young women had come to live in the little room next door to our three young men, and they turned out to be prostitutes. Relationships were soon established, through Chambon, who made the women's acquaintance in the absence of his companions and introduced them to the latter as their neighbours, at supper. One of them, Argeville, was attractive, the other not at all. " The two women did not stay long in the house, but their short sojourn sowed disunion in our little company. Each of us wanted the exclusive possession of Argeville, although we knew her trade and that she practised it during the day. She used all her art to conceal from each the favours that she granted to the other two, but everything came out because no one would have anything to do with her companion. Then it was agreed that they should sleep with us in turn, but Boudard, who was the second with Argeville, would not let her share the clock-maker's bed afterwards, on the grounds that he was unhealthy. As Argeville did not like Chambon, she strongly supported this accusation, and we agreed that thenceforward she should sleep between Boudard and me, while Chambon

had her friend to himself. Chambon had to be content with this ; but peace only lasted for twenty-four hours, and next evening hostilities began again." After a heated argument, they came to blows, and a violent scene took place, as a result of which Chambon left next day and went back to Auxerre. The other two decided that they could no longer live together, but they parted good friends. Restif went back to Mme. Lallemand's, who had now moved to the Rue Saint-Julien le Pauve, and at the same time he left the Imprimerie Royale, as he found that he was a clever enough workman to earn almost double elsewhere. He went to Claude Hérissant, in the Rue Nôtre-Dame. It was at this time that occurred one of the more pleasing episodes of Restif's life.

He had heard of the arrival in Paris of a young girl whom he had known at Auxerre, named Jeannette Demailly, and that she was in distress. She was a pretty, young orphan of good family, whose uncle had recently died intestate, and two inhuman aunts had made use of certain ancient laws to deprive their brother's orphan of her share in the heritage. She had come to Paris and obtained a situation in a jeweller's shop on the Quai de l'Horloge, from which, however, she had been dismissed by the jeweller's wife, because the latter's husband had become too visibly amorous of her, and she was at present destitute. Restif found out where she lived and went and saw her and invited her to share his room and his meals. She accepted the offer. " I was still not without virtue, and I felt that I could love her as a sister. We settled down at once in my little room, and lived together as brother and sister (had things been otherwise, I would say so). I had only one little bed and we slept in it together for the first three nights without the slightest impropriety. But after that, I put a mattress on the floor and slept there covered with a single blanket, though Jeannette protested and wanted to take it for herself. ' Your work is harder than mine,' she said, ' and you are tired. I only do needlework.' ' But I am stronger than

you, and the pleasure of being near you and knowing that you are not uncomfortable gives me sweet sleep.' Every evening when we were in bed and ready to go to sleep, we would say to each other : ' Good-night, little brother.' ' Good-night, dear little sister.' And we slept all through the night. I was at work during the day, and Jeannette was alone in our room. At first she attended to my needs, mending my clothes and preparing our meagre food. Later she worked for dressmakers or furriers. When I came home I gave her just one brotherly kiss and then we chatted amicably. It was a very pleasant life." This idyll had a happy ending for Jeannette. One day, a rich mercer of the Rue Saint-Antoine, a childless widower, came to see Mme. Lallemand. He was looking for a decent girl for his shop. He saw Jeannette, was much attracted by her, and heard the story of the " brother and sister " and her praises sung. In a few days he engaged her, and in six months he married her. Thus was virtue rewarded !

But Restif was alone once more. From time to time he still saw Boudard, and it was he who took him for the first time to a theatre in Paris. On Sunday, February 1st, 1756, they went to the Comédie-Française and saw *Le Méchant* by Gresset, and Fagan's *La Pupille.* " I was enchanted, and thenceforward the theatre took the place of every other pleasure—save women." Soon after this, he saw *Andromaque* at the same theatre, and went into ecstasies over the performance of Mlle. Dumesnil as " Hermione." He later visited the Italiens and other theatres, saw comic opera at the Foire Saint-Germain, and in fact became an ardent theatre-goer. This enthusiasm finds expression in *La Mimographe ou le Théâtre Reformé*, which he published in 1770.

In June of this year Restif again changed his abode, and went to board with Bonne Sellier, the wife of one of his fellow-printers. The husband was a drunkard and a man of thoroughly bad life. The wife found consolation with her boarders. " She took the greatest care of us ;

each of us might have been her only husband by the way she nursed us when we were ill." The following year he also again changed his employer, and went to work for André Knapen. Notwithstanding his numerous love affairs and other distractions, Restif was always a hard worker, conscientious and keen on his job, and had by now attained considerable proficiency in his trade. He was, as he says himself, " what a master-printer would call ' steady,' that is to say, I never missed a week-day and never got drunk." His thorough knowledge of Latin, together with a useful amount of Italian and Spanish, a smattering of English and rather rudimentary Greek, but sufficient for his work, made him an acceptable acquisition to the workshop of the best master-printers.

At this period he had four chief friends. Loiseau, another printer whom he had known and been friendly with at Auxerre, had arrived in Paris in September 1756, and Restif had found him employment with Guérin, a wealthy printer of the Rue de Sorbonne, and later at Knapen's with himself. He became his most intimate companion. He was still very friendly with Boudard, whom we already know. Renaud, a fellow-workman with Boudard at the Imprimerie Royale, to whom the latter had introduced Restif on his arrival in Paris, and who had helped in getting him his job, also came from Auxerre. He was attracted by Restif's mentality and abilities. Then, the other Gaudet (" de Varzi," not " d'Arras "), whom he had likewise known at Auxerre. Restif distinguishes them as follows : Loiseau was " the friend of virtue," Gaudet of licentiousness, Boudard for ordinary intimacy and necessities, such as the buying of clothes and so forth, and Renaud for intellectual discussions and metaphysical arguments. Loiseau was five or six years older than Restif, of good family and education, and of a serious and sensible disposition. He was a good influence on Restif, who looked up to him and respected him. Gaudet de Varzi, on the other hand, was a cheerful libertine, who encouraged and aided and abetted Restif

in his debaucheries. Restif tells us that he never received anything but applause from him, " for Gaudet revered me as Omar did Mahomet. ' Make yourself the leader of a sect, and I will be your first apostle ! ' he exclaimed. He thought every utterance of mine sublime and marvelled at it : if I had said, ' Prostrate yourself ! ' he would have prostrated himself." He carried his admiration to excess, even in his manifold debaucheries. " My notebooks contain the names and addresses of more than two-hundred public women," says Restif, " whom Gaudet and I had visited and done crapulous homage to since we had been in Paris. I did not imitate Gaudet in his worst excesses on these occasions." Boudard was having an affair with an actress from the Opéra Comique, and introduced Restif to other actresses and dancers. Some of these were only fourteen or fifteen years old, and Restif describes some of the parties they had, which were extremely lively. His passion for the theatre was at this time at its height and he longed to become an actor and make his first appearance at one of the big theatres. He even went to see Monnet, the Director of the Opéra Comique, who granted him an audition and made him recite some parts he had learned and also sing. Monnet was pleased with his speaking and singing voice, but on asking him if he had ever acted, and receiving a negative reply, said : " Well, you are not going to make your first appearance in my theatre. Join some provincial company, and come back to me in a year . . ." This sensible reply was enough for Restif, and he gave up the idea.

Restif now left Bonne Sellier's and went to live on his own in a poorly furnished room on the fifth floor in the small Rue Sainte-Anne-du-Palais (now the Rue Mathieu-Molé), between the Sainte-Chapelle and the Seine. Here he went through another period of depression, and became melancholy with self-condemnation and remorse. His friends helped him to overcome this mood, especially Loiseau, who was exceedingly kind, sympathetic and sensible. He heard of the death of Mme. Parangon (of

which he mis-states the date), and enters into long jeremiads on the subject. This, with the after-effects of an infection which he had contracted, was probably one of the chief causes of his deep despondency.

He had pretty well recovered when the episode of Zéphire (or Zéfire, as he wrote it), occurred. This is one of the least convincing incidents in Restif's account of his life, and one of the most difficult to deal with. He first saw her at a third-floor window in the Rue Saint-Honoré. She was thirteen years old. He was greatly attracted by her and became exceedingly sentimental about her. She had been led into an evil mode of life by her mother. He visited her often—when he was ill she came and nursed him, and gave him food and delicacies and even money. Restif secured her removal from her mother's house and placed her in employment with a dressmaker. He saw her frequently and was very happy. He intended to marry her. She had a daughter by him in April 1758, and died in the following October (though in *Monsieur Nicolas* Restif places it in December).

And then he discovered that her mother was that Nannette who had been, as he said, the first woman to arouse " effective " desire in him when he was ten years old, and Zéphire was the result of that encounter between them in the mule stable at Sacy in 1744 already mentioned !

Now all this, and the dithyrambs in which Restif indulges as to the purity and innocence of Zéphire despite her mode of life when he first met her, is really a bit too much to swallow. As so often, he muddles up the dates. He says definitely that the incident at Sacy took place in 1744, yet in another place he states that Zéphire was born in May 1746, and that she was therefore only twelve when she died, and could only have been eleven when he first met her ! Yet the mother says that she was fourteen at her death. However that may be, Cubières Palmézeaux, who knew Restif personally, says " this astonishing history is supported by proofs " ; Funck-Brentano states

that Pierre Loüys was able to identify Zéphire in official archives, and Havelock Ellis says, " Zéphire was the prototype in real life of that figure of purity in a vicious environment of which some years later the Romanticists made imaginary but inferior copies." But see Tabarant's *Le Vrai Visage* for the many improbabilities and absurdities of the whole story. M. Tabarant very pertinently asks where are the " proofs " of Cubières (who did not know Restif till twenty-five years later), which he did not give ? Where are the archives of Pierre Loüys which he did not quote ? And he flatly declares that the entire history of Zéphire is a complete invention, albeit here and there a charming one. The description of the death of Zéphire is just like the ending of Puccini's opera, *La Bohème*—the scene in the Paris attic, with Zéphire as ' Mimi,' Restif as ' Rudolphe,' Zoé as ' Musetta,' Loiseau as ' Marcel,' and Boudard and Renaud as the other two ' Bohemians.' We even have Rudolph's poignant cry of " Mimi ! Mimi ! " in Restif's frenzied " Zéphire ! Zéphire ! " Was the scene in Murger's book (1848) suggested by Restif's ?

That there may really have been such a person as Zéphire I would not deny, but it appears to me that the whole episode as related by Restif is full of exaggerations and improbabilities and does not ring true, and that he was here giving full vent to that " Romanticism " (in the 1830 sense) of his imagination referred to, regarding other episodes, by Havelock Ellis. And the final dénouement is merely another instance of that incest fetishism which, in his later years, caused Restif to discover so many of his mistresses to be his own daughters. Restif's lamentations over the death of Zéphire are in his most flamboyant style, but his callousness with regard to their daughter ill accords with his alleged devotion to her memory. This child, whom he calls Zéfirette, he abandoned to the care of Zéphire's mother who had lived on her own children. He declares that she was kept from him and that later he was told she was dead. In his *Calendrier* he says that he

met her accidentally in 1774 and that she was then married. But he appears never to have made the least effort to see her or concerned himself about her welfare. In this respect, at least, he was no better than Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Of his friends, Loiseau about this time married Zoé Delaporte, to whom he had for some time been attached. She seems to have been a charming, good-natured girl ; they were very much in love with each other and were very devoted and happy together. Zoé was very fond of Zéphire and very kind to her and to Restif, and helped their *liaison*. Boudard, who was now working at a clandestine press, was living with his mistress, Sidonie Mentelle, an actress of the Opéra-Comique. Gaudet married Zéphire's cousin, Manon, early in 1759.

Another peculiar episode in Restif's life which he calls the " English marriage " happened at this period. One evening as he was walking in the street, he noticed two ladies in black coming towards him, whom he at first mistook for two of his acquaintances. As they came nearer, however, he saw it was an old woman with a young girl, both of whom looked to be English. They were walking arm in arm, and the elder one was saying to the younger in English : " My dear niece, do not distress yourself so. What is the matter that your eyes are so swelled with weeping ? " and the niece replied : " What will become of me ? " He went up to them, and said in English : " You are English, ladies ? If I can be of any service to you, do not hesitate to make use of me." " You are very kind, Monchieu," said the aunt. (Restif writes these remarks in English.) He made no reply but followed them. " They went into a little house in the Rue Pavée, and I guessed that they had taken a furnished room there, as from hereabouts to the Pont Neuf is the English quarter. I got a perfect view of the niece through the windows while the old aunt was talking to the landlady. She was beautiful from top to toe : rose-gold curly hair, a virginal Greek profile and a perfect waist. ' O

God,' I exclaimed, 'she is like Zéphire!' Her great eyes combined with her English bashfulness gave her an angelic look. In a word, she was exactly made to charm me. I gazed at her until the aunt had secured the key and the lighted candle, and they went upstairs to their room. Then I entered the house and addressed a girl of fifteen who was alone in the parlour. 'Can you tell me, Ma'm'selle, if the two ladies who have just come in are staying in Paris for some time?' 'Monsieur, they are two English ladies, an aunt and her niece, and are here about a property to which the younger one is heiress through her paternal grandmother, who was a Frenchwoman. They are having great difficulty in getting the matter settled, on account of the war with England. The only way to win their case is for the young Miss to marry a Frenchman, and this her aunt does not wish.' 'Could you tell me their names?' 'The aunt is called Mistress Macbell and the niece Miss Harriet Kircher.' I thanked the girl and went away, well pleased to have found out the names of the two foreigners. At this time both Renaud and I were strong Anglophiles, and the young person's nationality enflamed my ardour as much as did her beauty." She was aged about sixteen or seventeen.

The next day he called on them and told the aunt that he knew their names and the purpose of their visit. Upon her asking him how he came to know all this, he remembered an Englishman he had met, named Smith, and said that it was through him. She tried to remember Mr. Smith, but could not, and asked Restif where he lived. He replied that he had now left the country. They were both very polite to him, and he was granted permission to call again. On leaving, he quoted some complimentary lines of Pope to the young lady, who smiled and appeared duly impressed. Restif now discovered that by a curious coincidence the "Memorandum" of the opposing side in the case was even then being printed in Knapen's place where he worked, such kind of things being one of their chief lines of business. He found a proof of the

document in question, which had manuscript additions and corrections that were as valuable as the Memorandum itself, and this he despatched to the ladies' lawyer, who at once realised its usefulness. When Restif and the ladies visited the lawyer, he asked the aunt if she could get her niece married in eight or ten days. Restif at once offered himself, showed his papers to the lawyer, and was accepted. The necessary formalities being completed, the matter was arranged. The ladies were very grateful. A ceremony was performed, about which Restif's account is confusing, and it hardly appears to have been a strictly orthodox one. Anyway, it was considered sufficient to admit of the parties concerned sleeping together. As they were of different religions, this first ceremony was apparently the Protestant one, for Restif then says : " At six o'clock next morning we were married at Saint-André in the presence of the lawyer and the four witnesses he had brought with him. The case was decided next day, and we won on all counts, with costs and damages." Restif was delighted. " So here I was, married and almost wealthy. All my losses were made good. No sooner had I lost one dear and beautiful girl than another as beautiful, as worthy to be loved and wealthier, was sent to me." He moved from his lodging and went to live with his " wife " and her aunt. But his happiness did not last long. A few days later, when he returned from work, he found the ladies gone and the place stripped of all their belongings and his own. " I had confided everything that I possessed to Henriette : all Zéphire's money, which my friends had forced me to keep, all her jewels which I was holding in trust for her daughter, together with a bond for a thousand crowns ; in all a sum of more than 15,000 livres. I opened all the cupboards and closets. Everything was empty ! " On the bed was a sealed letter from Henriette, saying that their marriage was at an end, and that they had left for England. There was an insulting postscript from the aunt. They had left with an Englishman who had been one of the witnesses at the first

ceremony, and who was named Mylord Taaff. Restif made further search, for his linen, his money, but—nothing ! Everything had gone. But at last, in a wall-cupboard, he found his clothes, and another letter from Henriette, written in a different strain, wherein she said that her aunt had forced her to become the mistress of Mylord Taaff and had only married her to a Frenchman because Mylord had told her that his parents would make no fuss as long as his mistress was a married woman. And it was her aunt who had insisted upon their flight and taking all Restif's money and valuables with them. Restif returned to his old room at Bonne Sellier's. He affirms that some time afterwards he heard the whole story of what he calls the " Macbell plot," which in the main conforms with Henriette's second letter. He also asserts that in due course Henriette, who lived in Piccadilly as Madame Restifish [sic] and Mylord Taaff's mistress, was delivered of twin daughters, of whom, nine years later, he was told by Mr. Powell, a Plymouth printer he met in Paris, that they were very pretty. Their mother had suffered much from Mylord Taaff, who had become a profligate, and it was said that he had killed her aunt for suggesting that she should take another man. After the death of his relatives, he had married her, and as she had no children by him, he adopted her daughters by Restif. " I have heard nothing since about this part of my family, but have often longed that I could go to London ! "

Such is the account of this strange episode given in *Monsieur Nicolas* but in *La Malediction Paternelle*, *La Femme du Laboureur*, *Les Nuits de Paris* and other writings he gives some entirely different details. In *Les Nuits de Paris* he declares that the actual truth about this incident is given in *Monsieur Nicolas*. But again the reader is referred to Tabarant's *Le Vrai Visage* for the inconsistencies and improbabilities of this story. It all sounds very odd and in any case it is difficult to sympathise with Restif in this matter. He embarked upon it with the sole idea of

obtaining the favours of the girl and was then quite prepared to live with her at her expense. Moreover he committed an unforgivable breach of professional honour regarding the legal document. One can only say that the result served him right. The names " Kircher " and " Macbell " do not sound particularly English (the latter was supposed to be Irish) but French writers are notoriously eccentric with regard to English names, as for instance Victor Hugo's English sailor, " Tom-Jim-Jack." It has, however, not hitherto been remarked by any writer on Restif that in the *Archives de la Bastille*, preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, there is a voluminous *dossier* (No. 12,022) concerning Mylord Taaf, and another (No. 10,241) on the demoiselle Lannoy, his mistress. From the former we learn that Théobald Taaf, an Irishman and formerly a Member of Parliament in London, was living in Paris at this time, and was a Secret Agent of the Prince de Conti who helped Louis XV in his surreptitious diplomatic intrigues at Foreign Courts. Taaf is described as " un petit homme fort laid, fin, intrigant et peu scrupuleux," and had been in the Bastille in 1758, from where he had been released shortly before this Restif incident, by the influence of the Prince de Conti and M. de Belle-Isle, who had employed him in some intrigues in the Low Countries. It is also stated that he could not return to London, as he was suspected there of being a spy in the pay of France, which, of course, was true. He was, in fact, employed at the same time and in very much the same capacity as the Chevalier D'Eon. Thus there is independent evidence that at least this person in Restif's curious story actually existed.

Restif was now again in one of his moods of deep despondency, and at the urgent persuasion of all his friends, he decided to return to his home at Sacy for a visit and a change of surroundings. He was seen off by his friends on the boat from Paris, in which he travelled as far as Sens, from whence he walked to Auxerre in one day. He received a warm welcome at home after his

four years' absence, and the calm peacefulness of his life there soon restored him, both physically and mentally. His love of books returned to him, and he amused himself by beginning a translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and some couplets and single lines which struck him most in such poets as Tibullus, Propertius and Martial. Being nearly twenty-five years old, he was now regarded as having attained his majority and as being a " grown-up " man, which event was celebrated in due form. One day he received a letter from Boudard to say that his dearest friend Loiseau had suddenly died. This was a fresh occasion for grief. Restif's father had a project for marrying him to Mlle. Gueneau, who was a distant connection of the family and had a substantial dowry. While trying to arrange this matter (which came to nothing), his father advised him to go to Dijon, where lived some relatives by marriage—the Coeurderois—and to find some work there for a time. This Restif did, and remained there for a little over two months. During this time he had many fleeting amours, and as regards meals, he declares that he never lived so well in any town as he did in the Burgundian capital. It was here, too, that he discovered the daughter he asserts he had had by Mme. Parangon, as well as another of his offsprings, but the whole episode strikes a false note, and is undoubtedly entirely imaginary. It is a flagrant example of his parent-fetishism. On his return home, Restif was taken ill, and during his recovery had serious thoughts of entering the priesthood. But on receiving a letter from Renaud saying that Zoé, the widow of his friend Loiseau, and who had been so exceedingly kind to Zéphire and to himself, was dangerously ill, he cast all such thoughts aside, and hurriedly returned to Paris, from where he had been absent some four months. On the third day after his arrival there, Zoé died in his arms.

Restif was unable to obtain employment in Paris, and being without money was now in extreme poverty and compelled to live practically on his friends. He had made

up his mind to leave the city and seek employment elsewhere, when a letter arrived from Auxerre, from M. Parangon. In this, his former master offered him the position of foreman in his printing works, which had just become vacant. Naturally, in his present circumstances, Restif had no hesitation in accepting it, and at once set out for Auxerre, where he arrived on November 10th, 1759. That Restif should obtain such a position in the establishment of a printer of the standing of M. Parangon is evidence of the progress he had made and the efficiency he had attained in his trade—or as he liked to consider it, his profession—but he ascribes the basest motives to M. Parangon in making him this offer. Firstly, he said, it was to put a stop to certain rumours that were abroad concerning the former apprentice's intimacy with Mme. Parangon, and so that people should say : " If that had been true he would never have taken him back." Secondly, he wished to take his revenge on his wife's seducer by thrusting him into the clutches of Agnès Lebègue, a scheming wanton, a distant cousin of his own, who was also his drab as well as that of seven or eight other men. This seems to be entirely untrue. As regards the first, Mme. Parangon had now been dead two years, and the apprentice Restif more or less forgotten in Auxerre. " Such an ulterior motive had never occurred to M. Parangon," says Tabarant, " who very naturally, the place of foreman becoming vacant, had bethought him of this former employee who had been trained under himself, was accustomed to the work of the place, and better suited than anyone else to succeed to the post." As for the second, there is no evidence whatever that Agnès had ever been the mistress of M. Parangon or the others whom Restif mentions, and the assertion does not accord with the high esteem in which she was held by all who knew her, including his own friends and family. It is only one of the many vindictive aspersions he was to make on the character of the woman who became his wife, of which I shall have more to say hereafter. And he never forgave

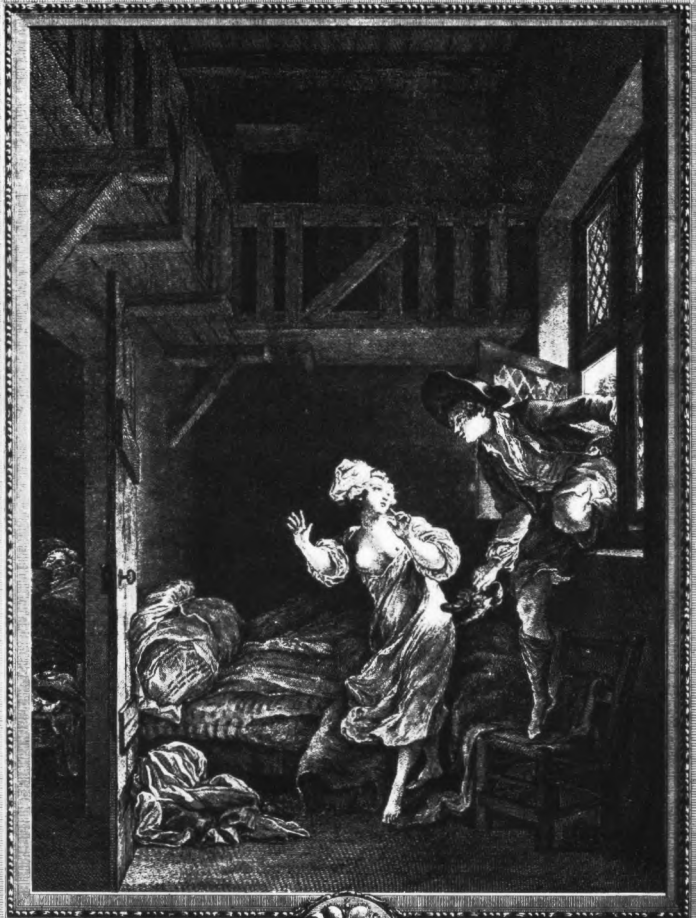
M. Parangon for being the husband of his " divinity " and the father of her children (though he strenuously denies this last fact), and for being the means of bringing him back to Auxerre and thus meeting and eventually marrying Agnès which he regarded as adding insult to injury, though actually the marriage was no concern of M. Parangon.

On taking up his new position, Restif did not wish to live in the house, so full of memories for him, though it was usual for a foreman to do so. A man named Rüttot suggested that he should lodge with him. He agreed. Of course, Restif declares that " the vile and greedy Rüttot was bribed by the atrocious Parangon," so that the unsuspecting innocent should " board with a low fellow devoted to his (Parangon's) interests." This is most unlikely. However, Rüttot was very friendly with his near neighbours, Mme. Lebègue and her two daughters, Agnès, aged twenty-two and Suzette, aged eleven. One night Restif met the mother and elder daughter at supper with his landlord. He declares that " the glutton Rüttot was the recognised lover of Mme. Lebègue, who liked bed and bottle equally." His late friend Loiseau had been ardently in love with Maine Lebègue, the cousin of Agnès, before he left Auxerre, and when holding forth upon the virtues of his beloved, had mentioned her cousin in terms of the highest praise, describing her as " a girl of rare merit." These words of his virtuous, highly esteemed and now deceased friend came to his mind, and at once predisposed him in favour of the young lady. Actually, she appears to have possessed considerable attraction, though Restif, in the light of after events, describing this first meeting speaks of her as " ugly Agnès.' She was well spoken of on all sides. It has already been seen that Restif had for some time had thoughts of marriage. His parents, too, were anxious that he should marry, as he was now twenty-five, and they thought he would then be more likely to settle down and forego his many promiscuous love-affairs, of which they had some,

though naturally not full, knowledge. Moreover, they had recently lost two of their other sons : Baptiste, who came next to Restif, and Charles, the youngest of all. The picture he gives of the latter is worth repeating. He had been killed when serving with an Auvergne Regiment in this same year of 1759, when he was aged twenty. " Charles had been a most promising young man. He had left the notary with whom he had been working, to enlist ; not for the sake of licence or even for love of glory, but, on the contrary, for love of his country and the public good. Filled with enthusiasm by the public announcements, he longed to defend his country against the enemies of the State, and his patriotic addresses on the Quai de la Ferraille gained five or six lads a day for the army. He was given an officer's uniform, and with this and his charming face he was able to influence the young men of his own age." Restif's parents were naturally pleased to have him near them again, and that he should have returned to M. Parangon, and were hoping that he would marry one of the many eligible girls in Auxerre. So Restif decided to ask for the hand of Agnès Lebègue in marriage, though he declares that he was trapped into it by the wiles of her and her mother and the machinations of M. Parangon. He was accepted and his parents approved the match. On April 22nd, 1760, they were married in the church of Saint-Loup at Auxerre. All the Restif family from Sacy attended the ceremony, as also did M. Parangon and the workers from the printing press, and many others. In fact, Restif says : " I do not think that there were less than 500 people present, drawn from every quarter of the town and every class of citizen." A dinner followed, directly after which Restif's parents returned to their home, but dancing then took place, and the festivities were kept up till a late hour for a provincial town.

The marriage proved disastrous. Restif ascribes all his troubles and adversities to his wife, and never misses an opportunity of abusing and slandering her. He depicts

her as deceitful, vindictive, lascivious and thoroughly immoral in every way. He conceived a violent and lasting hatred of her, and could not find terms sufficiently scabrous to apply to her. He avers that she was only exceeded in salaciousness by her mother, whom he pictures as a positive monster in this respect, and who debauched her younger daughter, the little eleven-year-old Suzette. In a great number of his books Agnès appears under one name or another—sometimes her own—as the acme of everything that is bad, and the high point of this is attained in *La Femme Infidelle* (1788), which Funck-Brentano describes as a "criminal book." The facts do not bear out Restif's picture of his wife. We must remember that we have only one side of the story. Restif could not have been easy to live with and was by no means an ideal husband. We know, too, that he was subject to certain forms of monomania, and having once conceived this deep and over-whelming hatred for his wife, he saw in her the cause and agent of all his misfortunes and reverses. Actually, from every other testimony that we have, she appears to have been a capable, sensible, respectable woman, with considerable intelligence and a certain amount of charm. That she was possessed of the two last-named traits seems certain, for otherwise Restif would never have been even temporarily sufficiently attracted to marry her. His emphatic and continual assertion that it was only the memory of the much-respected Loiseau's words of praise concerning Agnès which blinded him and made him for the time see in her qualities which she did not possess, does not carry conviction, and is obviously only an excuse to himself for his infatuation for a person whom he was afterwards so greatly to detest. There is also most probably a jealousy of certain of her qualities which caused a feeling of inferiority that hurt his self-esteem, for she appears to have been more capable and more sensible regarding business matters and the ordinary affairs of life than her husband, and was herself a by no means negligible writer.



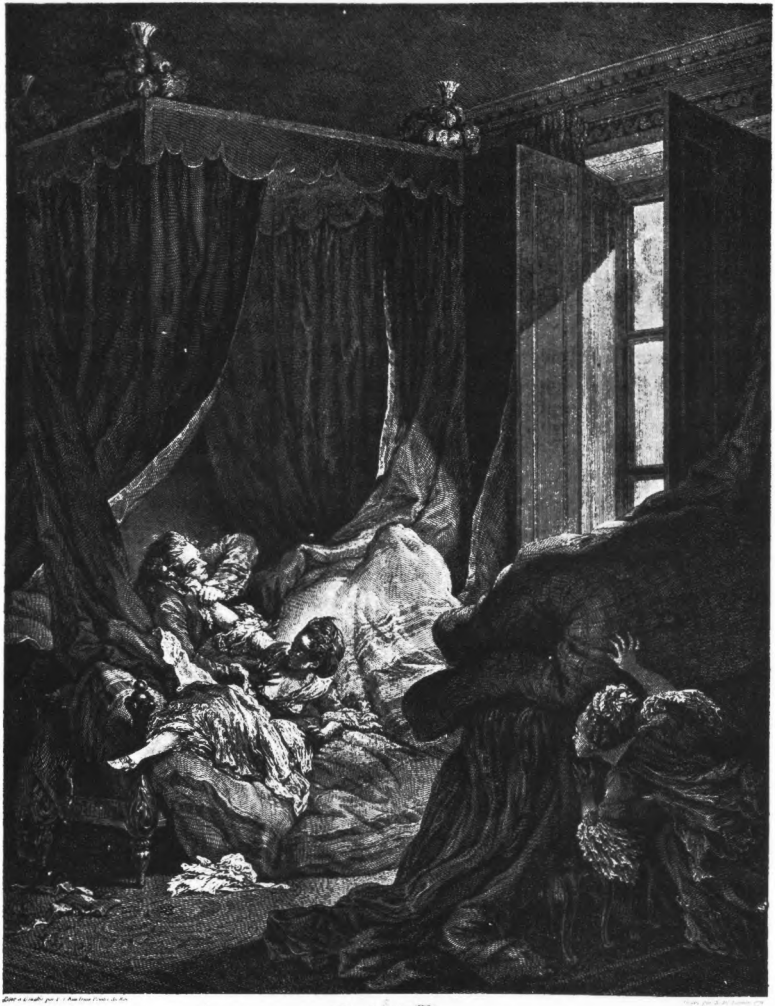
A Son Altesse Mr. Le Prince
Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Toison d'Or,
Lieutenant general des armées de sa Majesté Imperiale
Colonel proprietaire d'un Regiment d'Infanterie &c.

De Ligne et du S.t Empire,
Grand d'Espagne de la 1.re Classe,
et Royale, Commandeur des Morel de son Regiment.
Par son tres humble et tres respectueux serviteur Chereau

Dessiné à Lunéville par P. L. Aveline Peintre de Sa Majesté

Paris Quay de l'Horloge vis à vis les Theatins

Gravé par M. Chereau 1752



L'EPOUSE INDISCRETE.

A son Altesse Sérénissime Monseigneur Christian IV,

Prince Palatin du Rhin Duc Regnant des deux Ponts,

A Paris chez l'auteur rue de la Roche, la 1re porte cochere au dessus de la rue des Rats

Par ses très humbles et très obeissans Serviteurs Baudouin et De Launay.

AVEC PRIVILEGE DU ROI.

A superiority in such things, especially in a woman, was quite enough to raise the ire of the self-centred and egotistical Restif. Whatever the reasons and however unjustifiable, his hatred was undoubtedly sincere and passionate.

Shortly after the marriage, Restif took his wife to Sacy and left her there with his parents for a week, during which time she completely won the hearts of the old people, who were enchanted with her. Restif did not get on well with his mother-in-law and it was about this time that she found his note-books, in which his numerous love-affairs with various girls were described, and she promptly burned the whole lot. This roused him to fury, and he never ceased to bewail their loss. Agnès decided that it was impossible for them to go on living with her mother, and besides, she was herself anxious to get away from Auxerre and go to Paris. She therefore urged her husband to make this move, and suggested that she should go there first and endeavour to secure him a post with his former employer Knapen. Restif, who was not happy with M. Parangon, and also wanted to get away from his mother-in-law, agreed, and so in May 1761 Agnès took the coach to Paris by herself, and went to stay with Restif's brother-in-law, Beaucousin, the confectioner in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. On March 10th previously, she had presented to her husband their first daughter, also called Agnès. The child had been sent to be nursed and looked after at Sacy near to Restif's parents. She grew into a handsome girl, and we shall hear more of her later. Their second daughter was born the following year, and was christened Elise, but she was always delicate, and died at the early age of seven years. There were two more daughters to come, one in 1763, who died as a baby, and finally Marion in 1764.

During the absence of his wife, Restif consoled himself with two of her friends, the sisters Roullot, and also a friend of theirs, Maîne Blonde. Hearing from Agnès of the success of her mission to the printer Knapen, he left

M. Parangon, and after visiting his parents at Sacy, where he saw his father for the last time, for Edme Restif died two years later, he returned to Paris in June 1761, after an absence of more than eighteen months. Agnès was still staying with his sister, and he at first stayed there too, but they soon moved to a second-floor room in the Rue Saint-Jacques to be nearer his work. After a little while he left Knapen and went to work for the Widow Quillau, with whom, however, he only stayed three weeks, and then returned to the Galeries du Louvre, his first place of work in Paris. His earnings were small, and he had arrived in Paris with practically no money at all, his rapacious mother-in-law having extracted every sou that she possibly could from him before he left Auxerre. So they lived in very straitened circumstances and even poverty, for some time. Restif declares that her mother dissipated the money that his wife ought to have had, and that the latter " understood nothing of economy ; indeed, she had had no chance to learn it from a spendthrift mother with a greater capacity for selling things than anyone who ever existed. I was no better off with her than if I had married an itinerant fruit-seller, or a Paris fish-wife, or an Auxerre cobbler's daughter ! " His wife might have said the same of him. Agnès had not been used to such hardships, and misunderstandings were followed by quarrels. It was also at this time that Restif began to lose that care for his personal appearance which afterwards became so marked. He himself speaks of " my face emaciated, my appearance unkempt." This would not make Agnès regard him any more favourably. He became taciturn and sullen, avoided company and spent most of his time when he was not working in solitary reading. Renaud lent him books. Boudard had developed chest trouble and was soon to die, in November 1768. Agnès began to lead her own life, mixing with more prosperous and more lively companions, most of the male members of whom Restif declared to be her lovers. " But," says Restif, " not for a moment did she have

recourse to love to pluck us from the breast of poverty." There was the rub. He did not benefit from her alleged infidelities. He conveys the impression that he would not have objected to these if he had derived any pecuniary advantages from them. In this matter Restif appears in his most despicable aspect. Husband and wife drifted further apart. Besides earning some money for herself by needlework, millinery and similar things, Agnès indulged in the writing of letters which were to be read in the Society she frequented, as was the fashion in such circles at the time, like those of Mme. de Sévigné and Mlle. de Scudéry in the seventeenth century, and the contemporary Mdlle. de Lespinasse and Mme. du Deffand, and hers were highly praised and commended. " She spends all her money on pens, ink and paper ! " And later, when Restif himself, perhaps in imitation of his wife, was to turn author, this rivalry was another cause for his jealousy, and added to his detestation of her. But all this time Restif was no more faithful to his wife than he pictures her as being to him. He indulged in numerous amours, all more or less sordid. He also wrote letters, under assumed names, to various women and girls who attracted him. And so their incompatible life continued.

Restif's father died on December 10th, 1763, but he could not afford to go home. In Lent, 1764, however, he managed to get home to see his mother and his daughter. He stayed there from March 7th to April 21st, and his brothers and brothers-in-law were there too. The property was arranged between them. Restif received his share, which he transferred to his brother Pierre, " the shepherd," for a thousand écus. Pierre continued the father's work, so that " La Bretonne " should not be split up. While carrying his daughter one day, he injured his leg, and when he returned to Paris he was lame, and had to lie up for a time. But his material situation was now to alter for the better. On July 2nd, 1764, he was engaged as foreman in the establishment of the late Widow Quillau, now owned by her young son, at a higher salary

than he had ever earned before. It was a printing-house of repute, and he was well situated there. At the same time, the *modistes* by whom Agnès had been employed gave her more work, of greater importance and higher remuneration. "She obtained it easily as a foreman's wife," says Restif, anxious to take some credit to himself for this, but it is much more likely that she got it through her own ability. Anyway, their conditions had improved.

In October, Restif saw Rose Bourgeois for the first time in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and immediately fell in love with her. She was the elder of two daughters of a silk merchant. She reminded him of his two idols, Mme. Parangon and Jeannette Rousseau, both of whom she strongly resembled. He wrote letters to her, which he delivered surreptitiously himself, and placed them where she would not fail to see them. He wrote no less than twelve of these letters, and most of his spare time was spent in haunting the place where he could catch sight of his adored one. But the girl's father knew all about it, and one day the shop-boys seized Restif as he was gazing in at the window and carried him inside, where M. Bourgeois interrogated him. Restif admitted that he was the writer of the letters. Then this kind and excellent man gave him some good advice. "Young man, you express yourself with vehemence and write with fire. You have a soul—but your conduct would be inexcusable were I less indulgent. Your letters and your way of answering are evidence of your ability : use your talents, for you have talent, and make yourself a name ; and when you have something to your credit, come and see me again. Your future is in your own hands." The crest-fallen Restif then left, but he was much impressed, and the words remained in his mind. After much self-communing and mental turmoil, Restif decided that M. Bourgeois was right, and he determined to become an author and make a name for himself. He no longer dared to frequent the vicinity of the Bourgeois house, but the vision of Rose remained with him and became his

inspiration. As in the case of Jeannette Rousseau, he never spoke to her, but her effect upon him was none the less for that. He felt a new interest in life. " Here I will end this shameful epoch of my life, this period of spiritual death, of poverty and degradation. O heavenly and never to be forgotten Rose ! You restored my energy, you cleansed me in my own eyes," and in his *Calendrier* he says : " Rose Bourgeois made me an author, as Jeannette raised my soul, and two words that her father said to me made me a new man."

Of this episode it may be remarked that in *La Vie de Mon Père* Restif relates an exactly similar story as having happened to his father when in Paris in 1711. The circumstances and the locality are identical, only the name of the father and daughters is given as Pombelius, and there resulted no inspiration to literature, though it might have led to a marriage if the youth had not just then been urgently summoned home to Nitry by his father. This shows the kind of trick Restif frequently played with incidents which he thought would provide good and appropriate " copy." Tabarant dismisses both versions as complete invention, as well as other references to the Bourgeois sisters in *Le Drame de la Vie*, *Les Nuits de Paris* and so forth. He surmises that Restif was really started on his career as author by his position as foreman at Quillau's, where he supervised the printing of many third-rate novels, and thought he could write better ones. This, shorn of the " inspiration " of Rose Bourgeois, is actually what he says himself, and is probably the truth.

Meanwhile his wife had gone to Sacy to have their fourth and last daughter, Marion. She returned to Paris in February 1765 and brought the eldest daughter, Agnès, now aged four, back with her, and Restif became much attached to the child. At this time he was eagerly reading the works of Voltaire. " He seemed to me inimitable and so far beyond my compass that he stifled even the slightest inclination to write "—in the same way as he had been affected by reading Racine in earlier years. At Quillau's

he proof-read some books of Mme. Riccoboni, but her sustained elegance did not encourage him. Then they printed a book by Mme. Benoit, who had a great reputation in Lyons, entitled *Elizabeth. A Novel.* "While reading the proofs, I kept on saying to myself: 'But I could write a novel too!' All that I needed was a plot and some imagination, and these were forthcoming." Thus he started to write, but at first was dissatisfied with the result. "The difficulty I at first experienced in composition had two causes. In the first place I wanted to draw entirely on my imagination, to create everything. The second cause was an effect of the first: in my efforts to invent I often found myself with no foundation and, still worse, no inspiration; there was nothing to rouse or grip me." There is much truth in this self-criticism. Nothing is more obvious than that it was always necessary for Restif to have a basis of fact on which to impose the embroidery of his imagination. In practically all his works there is a solid foundation of truth, much transformed and exaggerated as it often is. Something within the limits of his own experience was essential as a starting-point, however it may be amplified and distorted in the subsequent development. In 1766, after several experiments, Restif settled down to the composition of his first book, *La Famille Vertueuse*. It occupied his thoughts most of the time, even at his work and when walking in the streets. The first draft finished, he decided to consult a man of letters before making the fair copy. "But what a choice I made!" he says. He went to Nougaret, the author of some trashy novels, mainly because that writer had just sent one of his books to be printed at Quillau's, and Restif had thus become acquainted with him. "I asked him to be my Aristarchus,[1] and he agreed (as though he were competent!)," says Restif, scornfully. He speaks in the most derogatory terms of his chosen critic, and says that he found him of no use whatever. It was the custom at this time that every book published for

[1] Aristarchus severely criticised the great Homer himself, *circa* 150 B.C.

general circulation should receive the approval of an official Censor, of whom there were several. Restif asked that it should be submitted to M. Albaret, who passed it, and the complimentary remarks he made upon it raised the author in his own estimation. Restif sold the book to the Widow Duchesne for between eight and nine thousand francs in present money, an exceedingly good price for the first book of an unknown writer, and better than he was to receive for those immediately following. As the printing of it was placed with Quillau, Restif was able to supervise it himself. He says that he wrote to M. Bourgeois to ask permission to dedicate the work to his daughter Rose, and sent him a copy of the proposed dedication, but received a polite reply in which the honour was declined. The book appeared late in 1767, but did not achieve much success. " The orthography is the one I favoured at the time, but it is unusual and interfered with the sales." But the price he had received for it encouraged him to continue, and he decided to resign his position as foreman printer and definitely take up authorship as a profession. His wife, by her skill and industry and other help, was now able to support herself and the children, and he therefore chose this time to give up his printing, when it was just beginning to prove profitable, for writing which often brought him but little. Funck-Brentano says on this point : " Restif's conduct in these circumstances makes all the more revolting the abuse and calumny with which in his books, letters, and among his friends, he never ceased to pursue his unfortunate wife, and renders all the more ridiculous the reproaches of practical incapacity with which he constantly overwhelmed her."

Restif and his wife had met a M. Moulins, a muslin merchant of Macon, who had taken a fancy to Agnès and proposed that he should supply her with materials which were to be paid for only after her work on them had been done and sold. This was accepted, and turned out a very satisfactory arrangement, whereby Agnès was able to make a fair amount of money. " I decided to devote

myself entirely to literature," says Restif. " The work of a foreman, conscientiously fulfilled, was ruining my digestion, and I needed rest. M. Moulins was employing my wife to sell his muslins at so much per cent the ell, and she was independent of me." They hired a lodging in the Rue de la Harpe, and when he had left his employment Restif decided to visit his mother for a time, " hoping in the retired solitudes of Sacy, to compose some fine and excellent book which I could sell in Paris in the winter and have printed." He stayed there for three months, from the end of June till the end of September, but " I wrote little and badly at Sacy. Nothing stimulated me as in Paris ; I felt my ardour cooling and my taste for country work returning. I used to work in a deserted dovecote, drawing up the ladder after me to be the more undisturbed, and here I read and wrote." Here he began *La Confidence Nécessaire*, but made little progress. He had conceived the idea of *Le Pornographe*, and had collected some material for it before leaving Paris, but he found it quite impossible to work at it, and that it was " the wrong type of book," for those surroundings. On his return to Paris he and his wife went to live in the Rue Quincampoix, where, during the last months of 1767 and the first of 1768 he finished *La Confidence Nécessaire* and wrote *Le Pied de Fanchette* and part of *Le Marquis de T . . . , ou l'Ecole de la Jeunesse*. He was unable to get these published till later, but instead of despairing, he wrote *Lucile, ou les Progrès de la Vertu* in five days, and it was published in 1768. *Le Pied de Fanchette* was " written for my own pleasure," in twelve days. Restif did not offer it to any bookseller. He got it approved by the Censor, who happened to be Crébillon *fils*, and then proceeded to print it himself at Quillau's with the help of young Théodore, an apprentice who was put at his disposal for the purpose. It appeared at the end of 1768, though dated 1769. It sold rapidly and paid its cost in three weeks. It sold at the rate of fifty copies a day, which was very high in those times, especially for a book by an

unknown author. Restif then sold *La Confidence Nécessaire* and likewise printed it himself. Fired with his new enthusiasm for the rôle of author, he now wrote much and rapidly. Also in 1769 appeared *La Fille Naturelle*, which was written in six days and remained one of his own favourite works, and *Le Pornographe*, which achieved a great success. This last-named was the first of the series of six books which he classified under the general title of *Les Idées Singulières*, the others being *La Mimographe*, *Les Gynographes*, *L'Andrographe*, *Le Thesmographe* and *Le Glossographe*. The last one was never published, and the manuscript is unfinished. There is also *L'Educographe*, which, however, was published under the title of *Le Nouvel Emile ou l'Education Pratique*, and a later and revised edition as *L'Ecole des Pères*. These books were to occupy Restif at intervals for the rest of his life, but none of them attained the same success as the first one, which aroused more interest by its title and its subject. They will be dealt with later.

Meanwhile, Restif resumed a sort of bachelor existence for a time. Moulins, the Muslin merchant, who was paying the rent in the Rue Quincampoix, had been away all the winter, and when he returned Restif gave up his room to him and went to live by himself, first in the Cour d'Albret, and then in a fifth floor room in the Collège de Presle, where Edmé Rapenot, an old acquaintance of Auxerre, who supplied the paper for the printing of *Le Pied de Fanchette* on condition that he was paid out of the first returns on the sales, housed him. Here, he says, " with four walls and a pallet bed (I had left what little furniture remained to Agnès Lebègue), I was light-hearted and industrious, with no ambition save to publish a book which would make me a name and win public recognition, so that Rose Bourgeois would read it. Valade's three louis (the price he had received for *Lucile*) kept me for four months at twenty francs a month. I took the ordinary at seven sous supplied by a cheap eating house kept by one Guillaumot, who had two charming

daughters, and this served both for my dinner and supper ; I drank water, and rationed my six-pound loaf so that it lasted a week. It was remarkable that I never once had indigestion on this diet, though my stomach had troubled me so much since 1764." There had been fresh quarrels with his wife, and Restif does not appear to have minded in the least leaving her under the care of the muslin merchant, so long as the latter provided her with a roof and the means of making sufficient money to support herself and the children.

Restif declares that his wife was brought to bed twice, with twins each time, by Moulins, in 1768 and 1769, " in whom I am certain, I had no part ; indeed both she and the merchant were so sure of this that they sent these four children to the Foundlings without consulting me. Personally, I had nothing to complain of, but when I heard about it by chance I infinitely despised Moulins. Moreover, the contempt which my eldest daughter has always had for her mother originated in this intrigue, which she made no effort to conceal from the child ; and for this reason I have at times excused her for her want of filial respect. I admit that, though I had my suspicions, I shut my eyes to Agnès Lebègue's conduct, as I was too poor and too busy to bring her to reason. However, I did just touch on the subject when, after Moulin's departure, I found she was doting on the clock-maker, Admiraut, but she only answered haughtily, ' Go back to your printing then and provide for me.' I was not in a position to go back to printing, and anyway I felt the greatest repugnance for it, so I held my tongue."

Needless to say, he himself had numerous fresh love adventures and experiences during this time. One of these was with Manon Wallon, the young sister of the boy Théodore. These two young people lived with their step-mother, and Restif boarded with them at four and a half francs a week. He taught the little girl writing, and she became warmly attached to him, under the influence of her brother. Théodore was completely

devoted to Restif, who had taught him his work. " Such was the affection that I had inspired in this lad that he regarded me as the Manicheans regard their chosen." The youth carried his admiration to the extent of thrusting upon the willing Restif the favours of his *fiancée*, Colette, whom he shortly afterwards married, and was equally willing to give him his sister, but Restif declares that he respected the innocence of the young Manon, though he was greatly attracted by her. In the use of this incident that he afterwards made in *L'Anti-Justine*, he does not show such self-restraint. But he avers that he was very happy in his association with these three young people.

Moulins, the muslin merchant, now left Paris for good. Declaring that the Restifs owed him money, he took away most of their furniture from the Rue Quincampoix, so Agnès came to live at the same house as Restif, at first in his fifth floor room with him, but later she had an apartment on the second floor.

Restif, as we have seen, had given up his work of printing, except as regards his own books. From daylight till three o'clock in the afternoon he wrote ; dined before he got up, and for the rest of the day read proofs for certain publishers or worked at the printer's on his own books. He was very hard up for money and then in 1770 he became extremely ill and despaired of his recovery. He ascribes the cause of this illness to his wife, and when she came to nurse him says that she did so " only out of an infernal malice " ! Both his daughters were now under the care of their mother, and the elder one, Agnès, nine years old, sat with him when his wife was not there. It was during this illness that he read the novels of Richardson, at that time very popular in France, which had been sent to him, for the first time. Of their effect upon him I shall have more to say later. He had already written *La Mimographe* which, like *Le Pornographe*, he had printed himself, and it was published that year. But, more important, he had also begun *Le Paysan Perverti*, the most celebrated of his novels, and he resumed it as soon

as he was well enough. When he was out and about again he printed himself *Le Nouvel Emile*, also in 1770, which later became *L'Ecole des Pères*.

In June 1771 Restif received news that his mother was dying, and he at once went to Sacy. He could not endure the prolonged spectacle of her death, and when she had lost consciousness, he returned to Paris, leaving the Abbé Thomas to see to the business affairs. Restif benefited under his mother's will by property to the value of about 15,000 francs in modern money, but he did not receive this till he visited his old home for the last time in 1775, when he sold his share to his brother Pierre, and he asserts that his wife then had half of it. On his return to Paris he did another three months work on *L'Ecole des Pères* and wrote *Adèle de Com . . . ou Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, but the only book he published in 1771 was *Le Marquis de T . . . ou L'Ecole de la Jeunesse*, which he had written three years previously.

In 1772 happened the episode of Louise and Thérèse, which is one of the most celebrated passages in *Monsieur Nicolas*, but as it is not essential to the story of Restif's life I will defer consideration of it until I come to deal with that book. In this year *Adèle de Com . . . ou Lettres d'une Fille à son Père* was published ; in 1773 appeared *La Femme dans les Trois Etats* and *Le Ménage Parisien*, and the following year *Les Nouveaux Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité*, which was an elaboration and revision of a manuscript written by Marchand, who had passed some of Restif's earlier books as Censor. The *Lettres d'une Fille*, like *Le Pornographe*, had involved Restif in trouble with the authorities, as will be shown later in dealing with those works. Restif also re-wrote a manuscript translation of Quevedo's *Grand Tacagno*, which he called *Le Fin Matois*, and published in 1776.

" In 1773 a very favourable change occurred in my circumstances," says Restif. This is how he refers to the definite separation between himself and his wife. " Agnès Lebègue had taken it into her head that she had a gift for

education." (He had previously stated that neither he nor she had ever taught their eldest daughter to read or write up to the age of nine, but the child had taught herself after a fashion.) " I doubted if she had any more talent for this than for commerce, but I never argued about such things. She took some pupils to board and, with the consent of their parents, established herself in the provinces, where the fees sufficed for the upkeep of herself and her pupils. She left her daughter Agnès in Paris, with a Mme. Marie, milliner and jeweller on the Quai de Gèvre. She gave her full instructions before departing, and she did not spare me in the process. This ill-balanced woman thought she could do without me and be sufficient to herself. She regarded me as destitute of all merit and of any business capacity whatsoever. Agnès Lebègue was in an ecstasy of joy at leaving me. She took all the furniture, all the linen, although it had belonged to my mother, and departed with my daughter Marion and her pupils, leaving me with four walls and a pallet. I confess that I was no less pleased than she. Her peevish temper and obvious loathing of me, which she tried to instil into the two children, had made her an intolerable burden. I could breathe again and work undisturbed ; and if I often wanted for necessities, at least my sufferings were not aggravated by a fury who was always ready to thwart me in every slightest thing."

In May 1774 Louis XV died. Restif does not refer to it. He did not realise that it was the end of the Ancien Régime, just as in England in 1910, people did not realise that the death of Edward VII was the real end of the nineteenth century and that a new era had begun.

As soon as his wife had left him, Restif resumed his amours with renewed energy, and so numerous were they that it would be tedious to detail them. Suffice it, therefore, to say that his time was fully occupied between them and his literary work. He concentrated on finishing *Le Paysan Perverti* which, with *Monsieur Nicolas*, is undoubtedly his best achievement. " This work was to bring about a change

in my fortunes. Up to its publication I had remained unknown ; even the success of my *Pornographe* had done little to lift me from obscurity : the book was anonymous, and as it brought me in nothing I had not emerged from the dust wherein I dwelt. The profit on subsequent productions had been swallowed up in household expenses or in discharging Drastoc's bills. At last, on November 1st, 1775, I distributed copies of *Le Paysan* to those booksellers who had agreed to take them, without the least suspicion of the success this book, which Delalain had scorned, was to have." It was the first of Restif's books on which his full name appeared on the title-page. It sold rapidly, and the first edition was exhausted in six weeks. A second edition followed, with nearly twenty new letters added. " Meanwhile a certain Delaporte of Toulouse, who is now a printer in Paris, pirated my first edition. As I was unaware of this forgery, I printed a third edition two years later, which sold slowly, because the provinces were flooded with pirated editions to the number of more than ten, and that swindler Delaporte's edition, which was cheaper than mine, was on sale in Paris. Thus a book which should have put me in easy circumstances brought me in scarcely anything ; literary brigandage robbed me of my profit." All these editions were without illustrations, as all his books up to now had been. Restif declares that nearly all his publishers defrauded him, or else they went bankrupt, and it is the same story with practically all his books—by his own account he never made very much out of any of them. He certainly never seems to have possessed much money, even after his most successful publications, except *Les Contemporaines*, but whether this was entirely the result of the failings and rogueries of his publishers, or partly due to his own casual and incompetent methods of doing business, is a point that cannot now be determined.

Restif's wife returned to Paris again for a time in 1776, where she was detained by floods, together with her pupils, " who in the Capital cost her double what she

earned ; for the woman never could calculate her expenses," says Restif. " After pestering me for money, in spite of her promise that the 1,000 francs advanced in the previous year would suffice her, she laid me under a final contribution. ' I am taking everything away with me,' she said to my eldest daughter on leaving. ' We must not leave him anything. He works better when he has nothing.' Such was this woman, who since has played the part of a suffering and misused wife for the benefit of certain persons." During this time Restif was living in considerable poverty. To do him justice, he spent whatever money he had got in the production of his books. He had put all the money he possessed—about 18,000 francs in present value—into the publication of *Le Paysan*, and had difficulty in getting the returns due to him from the publisher and booksellers. He says that he often bought two pancakes at about a farthing each for his supper and ate them on his way and drank the water in the public fountain. All his time was divided between his literary labours and his amours. Of the latter, the principal one was that with the girl Virginie, which he describes at considerable length and who, of course, he eventually discovered was one of his own daughters ! *L'Ecole des Pères*, the final version of *Le Nouvel Emile* appeared in 1776, and *Les Gynographes* and *Le Quadragénaire* in the following year. *Le Nouvel Abeilard* was his only publication in 1778. These are not amongst the most important of his works, though it may be noted that *Le Quadragénaire* was the first of his books to appear with those charming illustrations which afterwards became such a feature of his publications. The suggestion for this was made by the Widow Duchesne, who published many of his books, and our gratitude is due to her for a pleasure which we might otherwise have missed. In 1779 appeared *La Vie de Mon Père*, which some critics consider to be Restif's best book, and although dated 1780, *La Malédiction Paternelle* was also published in 1779, and is interesting mainly for biographical reasons.

At the end of 1778, Agnès gave up taking pupils, and set up as a milliner in Joigny, " but she was not industrious enough," says Restif, " and after having sold everything and lost all her money returned to Paris with Marion, my youngest daughter, now fourteen years old. After her return, I continued living alone in the Rue de Bièvre, in the house of a certain Mme. Debée. Misfortune and a conviction of her incapacity had produced some change in Agnès Lebègue's disposition ; from being peevish, insolent and intolerable, she had become almost complacent and submissive, or it may have been wily and politic. Also it must be admitted that she was impressed by such little reputation as I had acquired. I took my meals with her, paying her for my board. Then young Marion caused us great trouble. She ran away from her mother and happily ! took refuge with some pious ladies in the Rue Mouffetard, by name Garnier, with whom she remained for five years. Too busy to support the troubles of my household, I ceased all visits to Agnès Lebègue for about six months from March 25th, 1779." There is the self-revealing phrase : " too busy to support the trouble of my household." Both his daughters placed with other people, his wife alone and hard up, Restif just could not be bothered with them. He was " too busy " with his writing and his amours. But in fairness it must be said that he was not leading an easy or luxurious life himself ; far from it. Writing of this period, in 1796, he says : " This is how I lived : I never drank wine save in company ; I ate little and of the simplest ; I lodged on the fourth floor and only had the necessary furniture. I never had a fire save when others were working with me ; for myself, I wrote in bed. But this practice is dangerous both to health and morals ; often on going out I would be seized with a fit of eroticism, due to overheating in bed. A feeble excuse ! I have not bought a suit since 1773 (twenty-three years !) I am in need of shirts. My daily wear is an ancient blue surtout, the oldest of my garments. All my money goes in the preparation of

editions on which, since 1789, I (but not the booksellers) have lost consistently." As regards writing and reading in bed, Restif has described the pernicious effect the reading of *Le Portier des Chartreux*, which had been lent to him, while in bed, had upon his highly excitable nature, as far back as 1758.

In 1780 the publication began of Restif's longest work, or more accurately, collection of stories, scenes and anecdotes, which, with its various continuations, went on for the next ten years. *Les Contemporaines, ou Avantures des plus jolies Femmes de l'âge présent* appeared in 17 volumes from 1780 to 1782, followed by *Les Contemporaines du Commun*, 13 volumes, 1782–83, and *Les Contemporaines par Gradation*, 12 volumes, in 1783, the whole 42 volumes containing 272 *nouvelles* and 444 short stories, not counting the framework, having taken him six years to write. They contain a vast number of most delightful illustrations. Between 1781 and 1788 Restif issued a second edition of the first thirty volumes, which is more rare than the first, and to which he made many additions. The various continuations were *Les Françaises* (1786), 4 volumes, *Les Parisiennes* (1787), 4 volumes, *Le Palais-Royal* (1790), 3 volumes, and *Les Provinciales, ou l'Année des Dames Nationales*, 12 volumes (1791–94). These books form a collection of at least 1,050 short stories in 65 volumes, and he published several other separate works as well, in between times. These particulars should rightly come in the section of this book dealing with Restif's works, but I give them here to show his literary activity at this period. He made more money out of *Les Contemporaines* than any of his other works, and it is computed that he received the equivalent of at least 300,000 francs in present money, but even this does not appear to have altered his mode of life or made him affluent for any length of time, and later he became poorer than ever, for, as we shall see, he was to lose all he had saved, through no fault of his own.

From 1780 to 1782 was the period of Restif's *liaison*

with Sara Debée, the young daughter of his landlady in the Rue de Bièvre, near the Place Maubert. This was the longest of all his affairs, and he has left us two elaborate accounts of it, each as long as a full-length modern novel, and with the details and analysis of feelings worthy of Proust. One is *La Dernière Avanture d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq ans* (1783), and the other is the whole of the last section of *Monsieur Nicolas* (1797), which forms a sort of supplement to that work. It is one of the most famous descriptions of a love affair in eighteenth-century literature. Sara was at this time eighteen years of age. She occupied the room above Restif's. She was " a tall perfectly formed girl, elegantly dressed and with a beautiful waist and an enchanting face." Her mother was a handsome woman, but entirely without morals. She had prostituted her daughter at a very early age, and was now on the look-out to find her a lover who could afford to be generous and by whom she could herself profit. She thrust her daughter under Restif's notice, and he became deeply enamoured with her. He regarded her at first as a daughter, and they addressed each other as " My dear daughter " and " My beloved papa." She told him " You shall be my lover, my husband and my father." In this way she stimulated his incest complex. Under the tutelage of her mother, she skilfully played him up, at one time appearing affectionate, natural, gay, and granting him all her favours, at another being cold, or coy, or sad. He suffered agonies of jealousy, or suspense, or despair, which alternated with ecstasies of pleasure, happiness and joy. And all the while she and her mother were stripping him of every penny he possessed, by crafty and cunning wiles. Indeed, it is certain that in this way Restif lost some of the money he was making by his books. After a time, the fool's paradise in which he was living came to an end, but the parting was long drawn out. Sara's moods and coquetteries and infidelities created responsive irritation, gloom and misery in Restif. Quarrels, scenes and sulks resulted, and

at last, in July 1782 they separated for ever, Sara to a new lover, Restif to his literary work with frayed nerves and nearly empty pockets, for he had not then received the bulk of what he made by *Les Contemporaines*. Such was the last adventure of a man of forty-five ! (Restif was actually nearly forty-eight at this time.)

Restif had written *La Paysanne Pervertie* before he had started his affair with Sara, in 1780. It was completed in thirty days, but was not published till 1784. By 1787 he had revised and converted the two books into one, under the title of *Le Paysan et la Paysanne Pervertis* which was dated 1784, and this is the more usual form in which these works are referred to to-day. There had meanwhile appeared *La Découverte Australe* (1781), *L'Andrographe* (1782), and *La Prévention Nationale* (1784), the *Homme de Quarante-cinq* describing the Sara episode having appeared in 1783, as already stated. Also in 1784 were published the truly delightful illustrations to *Le Paysan* and *La Paysanne*, which were inserted in the existing copies of the two separate books, and later in the revised combined version. *Les Veillées du Marais* appeared in 1785. This, with *Les Françaises* (1786) and *Les Parisiennes* (1787), already mentioned, brings us up to near the Revolution.

During the Sara episode, the marriage of Restif's eldest daughter took place. Agnès Restif was now a tall good-looking girl of nineteen, resembling her mother in both looks and character. Her husband was Charles-Marie Augé, a childless widower, nearly forty years old and of unprepossessing appearance, but was considered to be a good match. Agnès was living at the time with her aunt, Mme. Bizet, one of Restif's sisters. Restif, in the light of after events, declares that he strenuously opposed the marriage from the first, but that his wife favoured it merely to spite him, his sister supported it to get rid of her niece, and the girl herself wanted it to be freed from the control of her mother and her aunt. But he contradicts himself later by saying that his wife also was against it, and his sister only favoured it to spite her. However, his

daughter married Augé in May 1781. The result was even more disastrous than Restif's own marriage. Augé appears to have been a brute of the worst kind, with a maniacal temper and thoroughly depraved. He ill-treated his young wife to such a degree that she left him in July 1785, and eventually obtained a divorce from him when, after 1792, such a thing became possible under the Revolution. He also pursued his father-in-law with a virulent hatred, and even endangered his life at the time of the Revolution. Restif took his revenge on him in two books, *Ingénue Saxancour* (1789) and above all in the revolting characters of "Vitnègre" and "Guae" in *L'Anti-Justine* (1798).

When Restif left Sara and the Rue de Bièvre, he returned to his wife, who was working once more as a milliner, and also took a few pupils again. They lived in the Rue des Bernardins, but he also took a room in the Rue Saint-Jacques where he could be alone and undisturbed, and do his writing and proof-reading in seclusion. He also had a bed put there, where he could sleep when he wished, and he usually only visited his wife at dinner-time. For a little while they remained on fairly good terms, but disagreements soon recurred. "I have been married since 1760," he says, "to a peevish woman with all the malice of the Auxerroises and not one of their qualities. She is slothful while wanting to appear industrious; she is a coquette and a spendthrift, with no more capacity for education than for administration. In 1773 I was witness a hundred times of her capricious treatment of her pupils, and of the barbarous and stupid way in which she would thwart them without reason or necessity. She did not want to be well-to-do, respected, kind, industrious, economical and foreseeing—happy, in fact—but to appear so; the reality alone held nothing to attract her. Above all, she made it a duty and a practice to play false with me. Such was my companion, such the woman who has made my life a torment. It is impossible to express what I suffered during the early years! She

had lovers, and they only made her more cross-grained and more impudent as far as I was concerned. And yet I only disclose these things in order to arraign myself. I was born trusting and careless, hostile to any claims on my attention save those of work ; I did not want to supervise things or examine into them. I saw and suffered but said nothing, for fear of provoking a quarrel. Such a temperament is no good save with an excellent woman. I sought consolation elsewhere, but by doing so only added to the irregularities in my household." What he says here about himself is truer than that about his wife. Restif about this time became acquainted with two young men of letters, Joubert and Fontanes, who were afterwards to become celebrated—especially the former, " the last great *Pensée*-writer of France and of Europe." They were introduced to his wife, and in the eternal matrimonial differences, they took her side, for which he never forgave them. Indeed, he cannot find anything too bad to say about them, and of Fontanes in particular he relates the most scandalous things. Joubert, especially, became greatly attracted by Mme. Restif, and thought very highly of her, which, in view of his sober and praiseworthy character, is a great testimony in her favour. Things came to such a pass between husband and wife that at last, on November 25th, 1785, Agnès Lebègue left Restif for good. The next day his two daughters came to live with him. He had received more money from his books, and was now better off than his wife and than he had ever been, but did not therefore alter his mode of life. Before the separation, and in the seclusion of his room in the Rue Saint-Jacques, he had begun that vitriolic book, *La Femme Infidelle*, in which he pours forth his pent-up venom against his wife, and her friends, which he published in 1788. He had hoped to marry his younger daughter, Marion, to the Chevalier de Saint-Mars, a rich elderly man, a Brigadier-General and Inspector-General of Artillery, who was greatly attracted by her, but this was frustrated by a jealous woman.

At this time Restif numbered amongst his friends Beaumarchais, the author of *Le Barbier de Séville* and *Le Mariage de Figaro* and Mairobert, author of *L'Espion Anglais*, both of whom greatly admired his works. On one occasion, at the house of his great friend and medical attendant, Dr. Guillebert de Préval, he met Goldoni, whom he calls "the Molière of Italy." There was a distinguished gathering, and Restif says: "I know not whether it was the kindly attention lent to me or whether I was actually in better vein that evening, but it was the only occasion in my life on which I talked brilliantly. I scintillated; a thousand happy remarks escaped me." He was prevailed upon to read a play he had just written, *Les Fautes sont Personelles*, and as we have already seen, Restif was a good reader. It was received with much acclamation, and "Goldoni, who was a good critic, praised it." Another and more intimate friend was Grimod de la Reynière, who is fairly well known, and several books and studies have been written about him. Twenty-four years younger than Restif, he was the son of a very wealthy Farmer-general of Taxes. He indulged in many youthful extravagances, and was as eccentric as Restif himself, to whom, however, he was an enthusiastic friend, and was perhaps his most genuinely sympathetic and appreciative admirer. He himself wrote a good deal. One of his fancies, at one time, was to regard himself as if he had been born penniless. At other times he went to the other extreme, but with all this, he had vivacity, a fine intelligence and an attractive character. Restif speaks in high terms of his wit and his hospitality, which he often enjoyed, and he provides us with an entertaining account of a party that La Reynière gave on March 9th, 1786, at which he was present. It was intended to be a reproduction of the cœna, or Roman banquet. "We were invited for mid-day, and while awaiting supper we were plied with manifold delicacies, all of which were calculated to edge the appetite for more solid nourishment. Also we were treated to a demonstration of the

phenomena of electricity by M. Catiano, the Italian, and afterwards to a shadow show admirably executed. Thus were we entertained until supper-time. At eight o'clock we were served with soup. This was necessary in order to reproduce the first repast (one that the host had previously given, which had been much talked about and scandalised), which was a true Roman cœna, combining dinner with supper. Twenty-eight different courses followed ; each one was ceremoniously borne in, preceded by two flutes and a master of the ceremonies holding a lance, with which he beat rhythmically. Also there were two unbearded boys, dressed Roman fashion in albs similar to those worn by our choir boys, who walked in front on either side of the dish-bearer ; two female servants, exactly matched, to take away the empty plates, whom legend transformed, as regards the first supper, into two young girls, one dark and the other fair, wearing flesh-coloured tights and buskins. Followed the gentleman carver (who was the master of the feast himself), conspicuous among the others by his stature. This procession marched three times round the table, after which the dish was lowered and placed in position by the lance-bearer, helped by the two young girls, since the silver dishes of M. La Reynière's father were enormous. There were twenty-eight guests, and the master of the ceremonies had announced that we should only have one dish beside the soup. And this is what we expected, or at most that the courses would differ only in their seasoning. Therefore we exclaimed aloud when the second one appeared, and there were twenty-eight, that is to say, one course for each guest. The dining-hall was lighted by 365 candles in honour of the 365 days in the year. The waiting maids' hair served, Roman fashion, as napkins for greasy fingers. In the middle of the meal all our attendants sat down at table without exception. The master of the ceremonies had intended this and arranged the table accordingly. By repeating his entertainment La Reynière destroyed all the legends which had discredited

the original supper. The dishes were various and delicate, the dessert magnificent and destined to be pillaged. The greatest propriety was observed throughout. I am far from considering this a delectable entertainment, but it was extraordinary. And we had others of which the charm still lives with me."

And then again Restif says : " I reproach myself with having forgotten to describe one of my most delightful pleasures : young La Reynière's *déjeuners*. The object of these *déjeuners* was to bring together everyone of any talent, whether from the Capital or the provinces. They consisted of café-au-lait, tea and slices of bread and butter with anchovies. They began at eleven o'clock and concluded at four with a sirloin or leg of mutton weighing fifteen to eighteen pounds. Only cider was served with the meat. Freedom with decency was the rule. The guests could bring anyone they liked with them, up to two, three or four persons. The coffee was weak, and one could drink as much of it as one liked without danger. The ration was twenty-two cups a person. Two Marsyas,[1] with taps for mouths, faced the room, one containing coffee and the other milk, so that each guest could help himself as he thought fit. We began with conversation, which revolved round every kind of subject. Then manuscripts were read ; poets recited their verses ; dramatists declaimed their plays and anticipated the effect they would produce. It was a veritable academy. Never was such a free and varied entertainment ; one made a host of agreeable acquaintances, and easily rid oneself of those who were not so. The young man's parents disapproved of these *déjeuners*, but as for us, we could not but approve of them extremely."

Also at the party first described was Louis Sebastian Mercier, author of the *Tableau de Paris*, with whom Restif became very friendly. They highly praised each other's works.

[1] These were classic urns, shaped like the face of Marsyas, the satyr and river god who challenged Apollo to a musical contest.

" I was also M. Mercier's guest at Montrouge in happier days," says Restif; " the road led through a smiling country to a charming site among gardens, with flowery undulating fields in the distance, and at hand an agreeable company." Mercier's openly proclaimed admiration of Restif was very helpful to his friend and the best testimonial the latter's work received during his life-time. " I thought he was making fun of me when he praised me to my face," says Restif, " and asked myself why he did so. But when I saw his *Tableau de Paris*, wherein I am so highly praised, I was convinced that he was serious."

One who did not praise Restif's works, but on the contrary criticised them severely, was La Harpe, the well-known dramatist and critic of the period, and for this Restif never forgave him, and wrote scathingly about him. " I know of nothing that this man can have against me save that I have an energy and imagination which he lacks "—and more to that effect. Restif also (rightly) regarded him as one of the chief opponents of his election to the Institute, and though he professed that he did not really wish to become a member of that body, it was a case of sour grapes, and made him still more antagonistic to La Harpe. There is a passage in *Monsieur Nicolas* where his real feelings about the Institute are expressed.

One of his greatest friends of all was Fanny, Comtesse de Beauharnais, the aunt by marriage of the future Empress Josephine. This lady was about fifty years of age when Restif was first introduced to her by Mercier. Her husband preferred to live in the country, and she settled in Paris, where she surrounded herself with men of letters and maintained what was considered the last famous salon of the century. Dorat, the author of *Les Baisers*, had been her lover, and was succeeded by Cubières, Restif's friend and first biographer. Most of the distinguished writers of the time frequented her evenings, and Restif was induced to read much of his own

writing there, before it was published. He describes this as " one of the most honourable and at the same time most agreeable of my friendships," and gives the following interesting details. " I used to visit the Countess every Friday evening. The guests, who were always numerous, talked among themselves until half-past eleven, when we sat down to supper and conversation became general. At a quarter past twelve we returned to the drawing-room, where we had free leave to remain for the whole night ; the mistress of the house did not desert us. I have often returned ho ne at five o'clock in the morning. This was the time for readings, which usually continued until three o'clock. I have read certain epochs of this work (*Monsieur Nicolas*) there. The guests who remained after the readings conversed among themselves. Now was the moment for the exchange of secret anecdotes (whereas our arrival had been the time for the exchange of public news). By arriving late and going away early a guest could be of this company and learn nothing. It was after three o'clock that the Marquis de la Grange, ex-officer of the Musketeers, used to tell us tales of the Courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI. The man was no genius, but he had an excellent memory. During the more intimate conversation after three o'clock, we often used to hear things of interest from the Countess herself, and she would also relate anecdotes which concerned her personally." Restif must have presented a curious spectacle at these gatherings, in his shabby old clothes and with his unkempt and even dirty personal appearance, in which he had now ceased to take any interest of care. He generally remained silent and taciturn at formal gatherings, except when a literary discussion roused him, and he then became vehement and spoke in a very loud voice, especially in his later years. But that he could be talkative on occasions is shown by an incident mentioned above and by another which Cubières relates, when he once talked for six hours on end about himself, in the midst of a group of pretty women, who had been careful to ply him

with excellent Burgundy, and were enchanted by his eloquence.

Before going on to the last period of Restif's life, I will give two amusing incidents connected with his mania for small feet and pretty shoes, and his anxiety that Binet, who, as I have said, drew the illustrations for Restif's books under the author's careful and detailed instructions, should see exactly what he wanted. " On October 25th, 1782," he says, " my emotions were stirred for the last time by the sight of a high heel. Since then, our flat-footed, thin-legged, mud-bespattered republicans have always repelled me. My beauty was turning from the Rue de la Parcheminerie into the Rue Boutbrie. The high and admirably formed heels of her slippers made me realise how favourable is this type of shoe to the graceful sex. I followed her admiringly. She had a leg like Mme. Parangon's. I asked her permission to bring my artist Binet to look at her shoes. At first she was surprised, but finally she consented, laughing. I saw her many times afterwards." Exactly a year later he saw an attractive brunette, who was shod somewhat like the lady of the high-heeled slippers. She had just entered a shop, and he waited until she came out again, and then followed her. He spoke to her as she was entering the passage-way to her house, but not understanding what he wanted of her, she asked him inside. Seeing that she was poorly lodged, Restif said he would pay her for permission to bring his artist to see her foot. The word *pay* was hardly out of his mouth before she showed him her foot and her leg, and as he was rising she said : " Is that all you want ? " The bargain was satisfactorily settled.

IV

LIFE. 1789—1806

FOR some time Restif had been in the habit of making prolonged excursions sauntering about the Ile Saint-Louis, the island in the Seine adjoining the Ile de la Cité upon which stands Notre-Dame, both by day and by night. Here he developed the curious practice of carving upon the stone walls of buildings and bridges notes of events that happened to him, and their dates. These events are of all kinds, and refer to his amours, his state of health, his literary work and incidents that occurred. They are recorded in greatly abbreviated words, occasionally French, but generally Latin, followed by the date. He had first begun this in 1776, but for a few years from 1779 they became more frequent. One of these inscriptions was still visible in 1847, on the Quai d'Orléans. It was his delight to re-visit these spots and read these inscriptions, especially on their anniversaries. To him it was like turning the pages of his own diary. He became well known in the quarter as an eccentric character, and on one occasion when a policeman became suspicious of what he was doing, a girl who lived nearby spoke up in his defence, declaring that he was well known and harmless. The street-boys at last began to lie in wait for him, to play tricks and even throw mud and stones at him, and so he reluctantly gave it up, but he copied his inscriptions into a book, which was eventually found in the library of the Arsenal. Nobody knows how it got there. This book was eventually published in 1889, under the title of *Mes Inscriptions*, edited by Paul Cottin, and it affords much interesting and intimate information. But though he gave up his carvings, he continued his rambles, especially at night, and frequently spent the whole night in this way, in the most dangerous and unhealthy parts of Paris, making notes on all he saw and

heard, and then wrote them up next day into little stories or descriptive incidents. These became the foundation of one of the best known of his books, *Les Nuits de Paris*, which was published between 1788 and 1794. He liked to describe himself as "The Owl," and originally intended to call the book *Le Hibou Spectateur Nocturne*, but finally decided on the shorter and better title. He describes the inception of it as follows: "The work perplexed me, because I had at first conceived it on a different plan. One evening, however, as I was returning in a state of deep emotion from my annual vigil in the Rue Saintange, I followed unfamiliar byeways instead of walking down the fine Rue Louis, and found myself, I know not how, in the Rue Payenne, which was lonely enough in broad daylight, and still more so at night. When I had reached the little balconies half-way down, the only ones in the street, I heard a sigh just above my head. I looked up and saw a woman whom I ventured to address. She was not the Marquise de Montalembert, but that charming image blended with what my eyes perceived; my imagination took fire, and the plan and object of *Les Nuits* lay clear before me. I decided that it should be composed of all those actual facts of which my nightly wanderings had made me witness in the course of my life. As thus outlined, the book pleased me and was three-quarters done." There is a delightful illustration in *Les Nuits*, which shows Restif on his nocturnal prowl, wrapped in his voluminous old cloak and his broad-brimmed felt hat pushed well down on his head, on top of which is perched an owl with wide-spread wings. It is said to be an actual portrait of him. He liked to think that he appeared as a mysterious visitor or a secret agent in an official capacity, but he actually must have looked much more like a tramp or a beggar, and often excited derision rather than fear. But by means of these nocturnal excursions he has left us a vivid series of vignettes of the ordinary life of the streets after dark, at this period.

LA GIMBLETTE.

Restif had access to a room on the floor above the shop of the Widow Duchesne, who published many of his books, to which he frequently resorted in the evenings, to correct his proofs and do other literary work. It was above the shop of the Widow Duchesne that Jean Jacques Rousseau had at first stayed on his return to Paris in December 1765 on his way to England to visit David Hume, but the shop was then in the Rue de Richelieu, and had now been moved to the Rue Saint-Jacques. Cubières gives us an interesting picture of his first meeting with Restif. It was one evening when he came out of the Comédie-Française where they had performed a new play, of which he wanted to buy a copy and went to the Duchesne shop for that purpose, as they specialised there in all the dramatic novelties. When he entered the shop he saw standing in the middle of it a man in a big slouch hat which covered most of his face and a large cloak of very thick dark cloth which descended below his knees and was strapped round the middle like a beast of burden. This man drew from his pocket a small candle, which he lit at the flame on the counter and put it in a lantern, which he closed, and then went up the staircase to his room, without saying a word and without looking at or saluting anybody. He asked who this man was. "What! You don't know him? That is Restif de la Bretonne," was the reply. Filled with admiration and astonishment at this name, which he already knew, Cubières determined to return to the shop on the morrow, more especially to see Restif again than to buy a new book. The next evening he arrived there just at the time when the *philosophe sauvage* entered the shop. He approached him politely and, wishing to enter into conversation with him, paid him some compliments and asked him some questions about his works; amongst others, he enquired in what year *Le Pied de Fanchette* had appeared and where he could obtain the best edition of it. Restif lit his candle at the flame on the counter, put it in his lantern, which he closed, and then went up the

staircase to his room, without answering a word, and without looking at or saluting anybody. Naturally, Cubières felt somewhat crushed. When later he met Restif at the Comtesse de Beauharnais's, he recalled the incident to him. Restif remembered it, and said, " What would you ? I was working then at my *Hibou Spectateur* (i.e. *Les Nuits de Paris*) and wishing to be a veritable owl, I had made a vow to speak to no one." " Owls such as you are really eagles," was the tactful response. " This reply," says Cubières, " appeared to please him, and after then he always showed friendliness and good-will towards me."

On another occasion Cubières met Restif with a long beard upon his face, and asking the reason for this unaccustomed appearance, was told : " I have sworn not to shave until the book I am now engaged on is completed."

" Good heavens ! " said Cubières, " and what if your book is in several volumes ? " " It will be in fifteen," was the reply. " And how many of them have you already done ? " " Three." " Only three ? Then you still have twelve to do—so at one volume a year it will be twelve years before you remove your beard." " Rest assured, young man," answered Restif, " I shall do half a volume a day, so in twenty-four days I shall again be beardless like you."

Another interesting glimpse of Restif about this time is to be found in the Memoires of the volatile Comte de Tilly. " One morning, to my great surprise, there arrived at my rooms M. Restif de la Bretonne, whom I was not aware that I knew, and with whom I had no connection. He reminded me that he had seen me at the house of a Comtesse de Beauharnais, who held what was wrongly called an academy of wits, but where one met good society, both men of the world and men of letters, though the worth of the latter was very uneven. I had myself been there two or three times. But I hate affectation as much as I like wit, and I had never gone

again. The author of the *Paysan Perverti* told me that he had frequently heard of me and that he had come to ask me for some erotic anecdotes from my life, in short, some striking adventures susceptible of being displayed in a work of great length which had been in his mind a long while, and which he wanted to write for posterity and not for his contemporaries, of whom he was wearied. I had to laugh at the object of such a visit ; it would have been absurd to be angry ; but I told him that my life was frightfully barren, though I thanked him for his kind attention. I assured him that I had enough taste to be aware that I missed a precious opportunity of rising to fame in the next generation, and entreated him to reserve his good will and his pen for me in better days, and to believe that since he had looked upon me as a promising subject, I might one day help his scheme by furnishing him, in a future I looked forward to, anecdotes worthy of his fresh colours and his original touch. My compliments charmed him, he was himself even more delighted with his works. He did not hesitate to confess that the *Paysan Perverti* was a book of outstanding merit which would live as long as a language he had emboldened *to speak of everything*, and as long as Nature herself, whom he had caught *on the run*. He congratulated himself on having been ignored by a *dull and puny* century. The calumnies of journalists and academicians who were not his equals were his first title to immortality. I replied to it all : ' That is true.' I bowed, and he took his leave." Tilly—who, incidentally, also gives us the best portrait of Choderlos de Laclos that we have—then follows this with a very acute criticism of Restif's work, which I will quote in the appropriate place.

We now come to one of the little mysteries of Restif's life : where was he and what was he doing during the first half of 1789 ? He himself says laconically that he went to Switzerland, to see about some of his books being published in Geneva and Neufchâtel to avoid the French censorship, and gives not another word of detail. It is

impossible to believe this. There is no confirmatory evidence of it, and he never makes another reference to having been in Switzerland. And can we believe that Restif, always so avid for fresh material for " copy," and so anxious to give us the fullest details of any new experiences, could, for the first and only time in his life, visit a foreign country—and that the country of Rousseau—without producing at least one lengthy book about it and making constant references to it—the manners, the customs, the people, the places, the country itself? From all we know of Restif's lively curiosity in such matters, his character and his practice, it seems absolutely impossible. But there is no explanation to be discovered, and Tabarant says that it is a mystery which remains unsolved. Restif says that he returned to Paris on June 23rd, 1789. By this time the curtain had risen on the first act of the Revolution. The States General had met at Versailles on May 4th, and Paris was in a ferment. There had also previously been much excitement during the elections. Restif states that on his return to Paris, disturbed by the new " atmosphere," he went to the Palais-Royal to learn the latest news, and there a young *motionnaire* took him to the Café de Foy and told him of all the events which had taken place. " What an absurd postulate ! " says Tabarant. " The whole of this bombastic ranting monologue is simply grotesque." " Shall I speak of the Revolution," says Restif in *Monsieur Nicolas*, " that strange catastrophe, the noise of which will thunder down the centuries ? No, for I have described it in the last two volumes of *Les Nuits*, and in other places." It is true that in the *Politique*, which forms the fifteenth volume of *Monsieur Nicolas*, there is much concerning the Revolution, and in that part of *Les Nuits* called *La Semaine Nocturne*, Restif has given us a description of the things he saw in the streets during those hectic days in July, but in Tabarant's view, they were mostly insignificant things, and he missed all the big events. On the most eventful day of all, July 14th, Restif begins his account by saying

that he did not rise till late, so as to finish his *Tableaux de la Vie*. We have already seen that at this time he did much of his writing in bed, and it was half-past three in the afternoon before he got out. " I went towards the Pont Notre-Dame . . . when I suddenly saw before me a tumultuous crowd. I was not surprised. I advanced and there—O spectacle of horror !—I saw two heads on the top of a pike ! Scared, I asked for information. ' They are the heads of Flesselles and De Launay,' a butcher told me. I shivered at these words. I saw a cloud of evil rising over the unfortunate capital of the French. . . . I went on. A thousand voices proclaimed the rumour : ' The Bastille is taken ! ' I did not believe it, and I proceeded to go and see the siege. In the middle of the Place de Grêve I found a body with its head cut off, lying in the gutter, round which were five or six people who appeared quite unconcerned. I questioned them. It was that of De Launay, the Governor of the Bastille ! After having passed the arcade of the Hôtel-de-Ville, I met some cannibals ; I saw one of them actually realise a horrible word often used since : he carried on the end of a carving-knife the bleeding viscera of a victim of the general fury, and this horrible bouquet made nobody shudder. . . . I went to see the siege of the Bastille begin, and already it was all finished ; the place was taken. Frantic people were throwing the papers—papers precious for history—from the top of the towers into the moat. A destructive spirit overhung the city." And so the description continues : " I relate only the things that I have seen," says Restif. And with all due deference to M. Tabarant, I think that it is better to have this account of an eye-witness simply of what he happened to see as he walked the streets in the ordinary way. For the " big events " one can go to the historians and memoir writers.

Restif had left his lodging in the Rue des Bernardins and was now living in the Rue de la Bûcherie. On this same evening of July 14th, as he was returning here about

eleven o'clock from his last ramble on the Ile Saint-Louis, he was arrested by the sentinel posted on the Pont de la Tournenelle and taken to the guard-house, on the accusation of his infamous son-in-law, Augé, of being a King's spy. This was a serious accusation at a time when people imagined that they saw everywhere agents of the Court. Restif was able to disprove the charge and was released, but he never again resumed his nocturnal visits to his beloved island. Some three months later Augé returned to the charge. At ten o'clock on the evening of October 28th Restif was again arrested and subjected to a severe interrogation, with regard to both his private life and his writings. His son-in-law had denounced him as the author of three subversive pamphlets. The first of these, *Moyens sûrs à employer par les deux Ordres pour dompter et subjuguer le Tiers-Etat et le punier de ses exactions*, which, as its title indicates, is against the Third Estate—that is to say "The People"—is certainly not by Restif. The second, *Domine slavum fac Regem*, a royalist pamphlet, we know to-day to have been written by Peltier. The third and most notorious pamphlet, *Dom Bougre aux Etats-Généraux, ou Doléances du Portier des Chartreux* is what would be described in English Law as "an obscene libel." Augé retracted his accusations regarding the first two, but persisted as to this one. Lacroix and the three distinguished authors of *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale* consider it to be by Restif. Funck-Brentano is non-commital. I unhesitatingly agree with Tabarant that it is not by him. Compare it with the undoubtedly authentic and equally obscene *Anti-Justine*, and the great difference in the style of the two works is at once apparent. Restif himself and his *Pornographe* is mentioned in the sixteen pages of *Dom Bougre* and this is taken as additional proof of his authorship by the three authors of *L'Enfer*. But I agree with Tabarant that it tells in exactly the opposite way, for the reference is in terms diametrically opposed to those in which Restif always refers to any of his own works, and is much more likely to have been

inserted with the deliberate intention of throwing suspicion of the authorship upon him. It is, in any case, a worthless production. Restif had, since 1788, possessed a printing-press of his own, and as Tabarant points out, this brochure, from the typographical point of view, differs in every particular from all his productions. It thus surely is not by him. Restif strongly denied the accusation and demanded an instant search of his premises, which was carried out. He managed to convince the Commissioner of Police of his innocence, and was released, but it had been an unpleasant experience. It is satisfactory to know that his accuser, the unspeakable Augé, was himself arrested instead, and imprisoned for four days in La Force, from which he was then set free on a declaration by Restif, who says that he was content to leave his son-in-law " to his remorse and the shame of his crimes." It may incidentally be noted that it was the political aspect and not the obscene that was the cause of the action taken with regard to these obnoxious pamphlets.

Restif records that in November 1789 he went to a dinner given by Serrac de Meilhan, his account of which is as follows : " I arrived at two o'clock, but my host was still waiting for two ladies and several men. On my arrival the only persons present were a deaf man, the master of the house and his two sons. The deaf man pretended to be an actor who had been summoned to amuse the company. He amused me, before I knew who he was, with a sufficiently well-told story of his brother, a gentleman of Lorraine, who had nearly been hanged with his horse's halter on his arrival in Paris. At half-past four everyone else arrived. One of the ladies was something of an Amazon : her gestures were masculine, her voice loud and her glance assured ; she was introduced to me as Mlle. Denis, a dealer in striped muslins at Cambrai. The other lady was shyer, or more proud, and no one mentioned her name or quality. I also observed a little man who, in his natty cleanliness,

resembled Jean-Jacques ; a handsome lad, twenty to twenty-five years old ; a man with an open face ; another who was slightly lame ; and I think there were two others of whom I took little note. I found myself between the dealer in striped muslins and the clean man, who was wearing a white wool surtout. My neighbour of the striped muslins made friendly advances to me, and asked over and over again : ' And what do the People say ? ' and would talk with no one but me. The deaf man related how he had nearly been hanged on his way through a village, because he was mistaken for his brother, an aristocratic officer who was journeying from Lorraine to Metz. He raised his trumpet in order to hear the questions put to him ; and irritated my neighbour of the striped muslins, who said as much out loud. We discussed politics ; I had come to the fountain head but I had no suspicion of this. After dinner I had occasion to say something which very much pleased the frank-faced man, who was apparently the husband of the other lady. Mlle. Denis took a liking for me, and asked to come and see me. In connection with some question about the *Paysan Perverti*, I sang Mme. Parangon's praises with deep feeling, and was somewhat surprised when the clean man in white wool remarked : ' But that is sheer romance.' This comment did not please me. At last the time came to retire. Next day M. de Meilhan wrote to me as follows : ' Mlle. Denis, dealer in striped muslins, was the Duchesse de Luynes ; the other lady, the Comtesse de Laval ; the man who questioned you with so much interest about *Le Paysan Perverti*, the Vicomte de Laval ; his son-in-law, who called himself Nicodème, Matthieu Montmorency ; the slightly lame, rather sour little man, the Bishop of Autun (Talleyrand) ; the man in the white surtout, the Abbé Sieyès. As for the deaf man, you guessed who he was. All these people came to meet you ; it was they who asked me to invite you.'

" I do not know what they thought of me, but they examined me most closely ! There was every appearance

that only two people found me to their taste ; the duchess and M. de Laval. The first had conversed with me throughout dinner ; the second had entertained me after it and paid me the most gracious consideration. However, next day the Abbé Sieyès sent me all his political works. The Duchesse de Luynes paid me a visit three weeks later, escorted by the Abbé, who was ex-tutor to the young de Meilhan ; she was dressed like an Amazon and, as she wore a plumed hat, my daughter Marion, who received her, constantly addressed her as *Monsieur.*" Tabarant declares that the story of this dinner is an invention, and that the people mentioned were otherwise occupied at the time. Certainly it seems a little late in the day for the Duchesse de Luynes to be continually asking " What do the People say ? " and in that company !

Restif's attitude towards the Revolution seems at first to have been sympathetic towards the People, while at the same time retaining a certain amount of respect for the Monarchy and the best of the old traditions. But the violence and bloodthirstiness of the mob, and especially the Reign of Terror under Robespierre, alienated his sympathies, while the obstinacy and feeble wavering of the Royalists, including the King himself, made him realise that a drastic change was necessary. His attitude was that of the average *burgeois*, namely, that a change in the methods of government and the abolition of the numerous and flagrant abuses that had grown up under the old order were essential, but that they should be carried out in a seemly and orderly manner. The torrent once released, however, together with the uncontrollable fury and violence of the mob and the more extreme Republicans who usurped the power, and the stupidity and futility of the Monarchists, obviously made this impossible, and Restif therefore remained a mere spectator of the hectic and shattering events that ensued, with a quite understandable sort of " O tempora, O Mores ! " ineffective lament. He is one of the writers who had foreseen that a Revolution was inevitable, several years

before it actually happened, and had said so in the most precise terms. " Of all the men of letters," he wrote, " I am the only one who knows the People. Take care, Magistrates, a Revolution is preparing ! A spirit of insubordination is spreading, and is being propagated. It is the lowest classes who are silently seething ! " It is established that Restif knew Mirabeau personally, having been introduced to him by a mutual friend. Restif and Mirabeau, the man whose unfortunate early death removed the only influence which conceivably might have somewhat controlled the gathering storm and kept it within reasonable limits, were no doubt congenial personalities. It is worth noting that in his *Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas*, Restif has a section on the *Système de Mirabeau*, in which he praises the latter, discusses his *Erotika Biblion* and quotes at length from his unpublished *Physique*, and in *Les Posthumes* speaks of him as " the most fearless and most wonderful of orators, a terrific champion, a real Cataline. One listens to him to be moved, as one listens to Lekain the tragedian." It is said that Restif assisted Mirabeau, not only with his pen but also with his own private printing press, and it is known that Mirabeau employed various people to help him with the material for some of his writings and speeches. Lacroix, on the authority of Cubières-Palmézeaux, attributes to Restif many of the series of pamphlets against the Abbé Maury, Mirabeau's consistent opponent in the National Assembly, which appeared in 1789, 1790 and 1791. If he indeed wrote them, it can only have been on behalf of Mirabeau, who well understood the usefulness of a fluent pen and a clandestine press, which he often employed in such matters, for Restif himself had no personal cause for resentment against Maury, not even acquaintance with him, and does not refer to him in any of his works. This also would explain the mysterious visits of Restif to Mirabeau, of which the former tells us without adding the reason for them, but which may well have been these anonymous pamphlets against the Abbé.

But it is not easy to trace all Restif's activities during the years of the Revolution, and even the course of his literary work is somewhat involved, the beginning of the writing, the printing and the actual publication of the longer books generally covering a considerable time and often overlapping from one work to another. To some extent, this may be accounted for by the conditions prevailing at the time, and also by Restif's method of composition and his financial circumstances. As we have seen, *Les Nuits de Paris* was published during 1788 and 1794. *Ingénue Saxancour*, *Le Thesmographe* and *Le Monument du Costume* with *Tableaux de la Vie* appeared in 1789, *Le Palais Royal* in 1790, and *Année des-Dames Nationales* from 1791 to 1794, with *Le Drame de la Vie* in 1793. Thus, the shorter works appeared while the longer ones were still in course of publication, and even they concurrently.

At the beginning of 1790, Restif started what appears to be quite a modern idea. He organised a series of Lecture-Conferences at the bookshop of the Widow Duchesne, which were held every day and two or three times a day on Sundays and public holidays. "I did this," he says, "for the benefit of lonely provincials who had no other form of amusement, to keep them acquainted with what was happening throughout the Kingdom and to let them know the situation in the towns and the behaviour of the inhabitants." There was no charge for these meetings, but they helped with the sale of his books particularly *Les Contemporaines* and *Les Nuits de Paris*, then in course of publication. One of his chief friends at this time was François Arthaud, of Lyon, "a man of taste and well informed, and sound on certain philosophic principles," with whom he went to dine once a week. It was Arthaud who introduced him to Mirabeau, and in return Restif took him to visit the Comtesse de Beauharnais, "who liked him very much." When, a little later, Restif was all but penniless, Arthaud came to his rescue, but just afterwards he was himself ruined by the political conditions.

A somewhat unusual incident is recorded by Restif as having occurred about 1791. He declares that he gave a dinner in the Palais Royal to a gathering of his natural daughters, with those of their mothers whom he could find. There were thirteen girls and four or five "mothers." "We were all assembled by two o'clock. I introduced them to one another, giving them their names and specifying my relationship to each of them. They all made friends and promised to love each other. We dined, and I was like a patriarch in the midst of his wives and children. 'Oh, what a wonderful moment!' I exclaimed." After dinner he read them a letter which he had received from another of his "daughters," Adélaide Collart, who was living in Cayenne and had married again, in which she asked him to send her any amiable and penniless girls of his acquaintance, and promising them a husband in easy circumstances, and good treatment in every way. They were all delighted and anxious to go, and Restif concludes the story thus: "All my daughters of the Palais-Royal left at last for the little colony in Cayenne, and in 1795 I received a letter from Mlle. Collart, telling me that all the young persons had arrived and had married wealthy proprietors. They had been eagerly sought after, for they had roused strong passions. They were all well established and, more important, well behaved; I had made them feel the necessity of this." Surely all pure invention! But it is interesting as being another instance of Restif's "daughter complex," and his "patriarchal" instinct.

From now onwards, Restif's circumstances steadily declined till the day of his death. His domestic affairs were troublesome. His younger daughter, Marion, in May 1791, had married her cousin Edmond, son of Restif's brother Pierre, who had stayed in Sacy to farm the La Bretonne lands and was now dead. The young husband died in July 1794, at the age of twenty-four, leaving Marion with three infant daughters and no money. At this time Restif slept at his rooms in the Rue

de la Bûcherie, where he had his own small printing press, and took his meals with his widowed daughter in the Rue du Fouarre, where she lodged with her three children. His eldest daughter, Agnès, though she had left her dreadful husband, Augé, in 1785, had only recently obtained her divorce from him. In 1793 she left her father and married an employee, Louis Vignon. From this union was born Victor Vignon de la Bretonne, who inherited some of his grandfather's literary fertility and became a novelist and poet, but of little ability. Amongst his works was *Les Nouvelles Nuits de Paris, ou le Petit Spectateur Nocturne*, published serially in 1824–25, and a comedy, *Fanny*, in five acts and in verse, dedicated to the Comtesse de Beauharnis, but never performed. He burned many of his manuscripts, " in a day of despair," in 1828. There was also a nephew called L. Restif de la Bretonne, who wrote a few things, mostly on Freemasonry, the last of which appeared in 1852.

But to return to 1793, Restif's wife now obtained a divorce from him. His account of this is worth quoting. " My daughter had applied for and obtained her divorce. I expected Agnès Lebègue to lose no time in following her example, but she did more than that. Agnès Restif had conducted herself decently, and despite the infamous conduct of her husband, had given incompatability of temperament as grounds. The perfidious Agnès Lebègue, on the contrary, made the business as odious as she could. We were in the midst of the Terror, when Hué, Sans-culotte Justice of the Peace, arrived one morning at the door of my little printing-room and, with a portentous air, uttered a formidable oath. He added a remark which was scarcely reassuring : ' You are wanted ! ' I advanced. Another man who had been concealed behind the door pushed me, and I found myself between the two. ' My turn has come at last ! ' I thought ; and my riotous imagination, which makes every night a misery to me, my vagabond imagination, depicted the Revolutionary Tribunal, Dumas or Coffinhal and their blood-sucking

jury ; the benches ; the gendarmes with drawn bayonets ; the thundering *your time to speak is over !* ; the shudder at the clipping of the hair ; the hands hideously bound behind the back ; the cart ; the hoots of the frenzied mob ; the heart-sickening descent ; the fatal ladder ; the laying on the plank ; the thud of the falling knife . . . the blood gushing forth. . . . Hué broke in on these reflections. ' Open your other door. We are going to put on the seals.' ' The seals ! ' ' Yes . . . ' I shuddered during the long pause that followed. Was there anything against me, then ? Yes, indeed ! I had spoken to our Tribune of the Panthéon ; I had announced myself in favour of Minister Rolland, from whom the Sovereign People and the Sansculottes had withdrawn their confidence. I feared that this might be remembered, in which case I should have been lost. Finally the Justice of the Peace asked : ' Where is your wife ? ' ' She left the house nine years ago.' ' It is on her behalf that we have come to put the seals on your possessions.' At this I breathed again, and terror was succeeded by the less overwhelming emotion of indignation. The clerk wrote out the *procès verbal* while Hué conducted a revolutionary raid, reading all letters and papers. They found neither coin nor *assignats*, and had to put the seals on nothing, to preserve the pretended rights of Agnès Lebègue who had causelessly abandoned, pillaged and ruined my home ! The rights of a woman who had not played her part or done her duty ! Her reasons for her action, which she had refrained from stating, were beneath contempt ; and she had the seals removed, without taking any inventory, on the receipt of two letters, as terrible as they were true, from her daughters. The divorce was pronounced, and her application for it was the only favour that Mlle. Agnès Lebègue has done me in thirty years." Then we get a real cry from the heart. " A word of advice to married men : once united, it is best to remain together, attached to one another, helping one another, and pardoning each other's faults. . . . I know by experience that this is the

only way to escape ruin and anguish in old age. No children, however dear to him, can ever be to their father what a good wife is—what my mother was to my father." The divorce was pronounced on January 16th, 1794. It is not apparent what benefit Agnès Lebègue derived from it. She returned to Auxerre for a time, made a stay at Joigny, and came back to Paris again about 1796, where, it is presumed, she continued to live by her needlework.

In the vivid account just quoted of what flashed through his mind on the occasion of the domiciliary visit, Restif undoubtedly gives a picture of the many executions then taking place in Paris every day, some of which he had witnessed. It also well shows what everyone in Paris must have been subject to at any moment at that time, and indeed, were once again, under the new Terror of the Gestapo in 1942–44.

Restif was now sixty years of age, in not too good health, and unhappy in his domestic affairs. Two more strokes of ill fortune were soon to come. In April 1795 he was taken seriously ill. " I have not twenty-four hours to live," he said to his printer. From the previous year and for the rest of his life he had a conviction that he had not long to live. His health had been variable. But he was now worse than he had ever previously been. He was moved to the *École de Santé*, where the head physician despaired of his life, but prescribed a course of treatment, which included twenty-five medicinal baths, and after a time he recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital and return home, to be nursed by his daughter Marion.

The second blow fell in the following year. The money that Restif had received for his books and all that he had saved thereof, was in *assignats*. In 1790, coin having become scarce and land confiscated by the Nation plentiful, the Constituent Assembly adopted a suggestion of Mirabeau's, of issuing a kind of notes, which were called *assignats* because a portion of national land of corresponding value was *assigned* to pay them off. They were made legal tender and the debts of the State were

paid with them. Thus they passed into current circulation, and while the Assembly ruled they commanded confidence. But too many were issued ; they began to fall in value, and finally, in July 1796 a law was passed relieving creditors from the obligation of accepting *assignats*, or in other words they were repudiated by the State, and therefore became worthless. Holders of them were thereby ruined, and distress was universal. Restif thus lost all that he had saved from his life's labour, and to make matters worse, his friend Arthaud, who had been rich and had helped him and would have done so again, was likewise ruined by the same cause. Restif, now nearly sixty-two years of age, was in a worse financial state than he had been ever before in his life.

It was in these circumstances that he decided to complete and to publish the work which is, it has been said, " by all critics accepted as his chief claim to permanent remembrance "—*Monsieur Nicolas*, his autobiography. He had first seriously thought of writing this book in 1777, and therefore claims that it was conceived before, and in no way suggested by, the *Confessions* of Rousseau, which were first published in 1782. We know from his *Inscriptions* that on November 14th, 1783, he carved upon the Ile Saint-Louis the words *Compère Nicolas*, and in his manuscript collection of his carvings he says : " This was the day upon which I wrote the first seven pages of the most important of my books, the most interesting and the most vast of my productions. During the rest of that month I worked nearly every day at *Compère Nicolas*, and in sixteen days I found myself at the ninety-second page." We learn that from the December 1st to 13th, he wrote from page 93 to page 170, and by August 20th, 1785, his manuscript had got to page 925. He began to print it on his own press in 1791. The first two volumes are dated 1794, but were not published then. When he was taken so seriously ill in 1795 his chief regret was that " this work, to which I was excessively attached, was printed up to the seventh volume, and I would have to

leave it incomplete, with nothing but a manuscript which was such that only I could compose from it. Also, I repeat, I had never meant what I was printing for the public ; I was improving on the manuscript and this second copy had still to be revised before it could be given to the printers ; what I had already printed was only for myself and for my friends." A few pages earlier he had written : "I had meant, in the event of my publishing this work, to prepare an edition wherein all names were disguised, retaining this manuscript and bequeathing it to some trustworthy person under my seal, with instructions not to break the same until a fixed time had elapsed. I do not want to do real harm to anybody in the world ; as for imaginary harm, it seems to me that I should not worry too much about that."

We may take it as substantially true, I think, that Restif did not originally intend to publish this work at this time. He had been writing it leisurely, at intervals, for more than twelve years, and meant to continue doing so for longer, for he intended it to be his masterpiece. But when the crash came and he found himself ruined by the *assignats* business, he turned in desperation to any assets of which he could avail himself, and at once thought of *Monsieur Nicolas*. He had 450 copies of the first seven volumes already printed. These he immediately published including the first two, dated 1794, and the remainder with the actual date, 1796, on the title page. He announced it as in sixteen volumes, and set to work to print 250 copies of the rest of the manuscript that he had already written, and to hurriedly complete it up to date. He corrected this last part as he went on setting up the type, and even composed some of it straight on to the printing press, as one would on a typewriter, without any written manuscript at all. This is undoubtedly the reason why the last quarter of the book is so inferior to what had gone before, and why its sequence is no longer maintained, but dates jump backwards and forwards, as incidents or subjects occur to the author's mind, making

it a rather confused jumble, in direct contrast to the first three-quarters of the book. The autobiography proper occupies the first twelve volumes, the last four being made up by *Mon Calendrier ; Morale et Religion ; Politique* and *Mes Ouvrages* respectively. The publication was completed in 1797. He also published at the end of 1796 three volumes entitled *Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas*, which were not printed by himself. His personal circumstances at this time are responsible for the sadness of his last allusions to himself in *Monsieur Nicolas*. " 1796 finds me a ruined man, as I was paid what was due to me in *assignats ;* to exist I am obliged to put this book on sale, though it was not intended for publication until after my death. I have completed my ruin this year by selling my *Provinciales* at a loss of 18,000 francs. Where will my misfortunes end ? My *Physique de Monsieur Nicolas* has been printed and put on sale, but it has not yet brought me in a penny." And in a final short section headed " My Final Sufferings and Approaching End, 1797," he writes : " At the end of my career, deceived by false friends who have starved me into publishing this work, abandoned by everyone, maligned by the most despicable of men, my meditations are all of despair ! My resources are exhausted ; the work which you are reading was the last remaining to me, and that has been reduced to nothing by its publication at the wrong moment, without the illustrations proposed, and in a form which I never intended for the Public ! . . . I do not know, Reader, if I am saying farewell to you. 1797."

Neither *Monsieur Nicolas* nor the *Philosophie* obtained much success, and Restif derived but little benefit from them, by which he was greatly disappointed. It is not unreasonable to suppose that this was the reason why, in the following year, 1798, he published, for the first and only time in his life, a frankly pornographic work, *L'Anti-Justine*. If the public will not buy serious works, he probably thought, perhaps they will buy pornography. But in this expectation he was likewise disillusioned. The

sale was slow, and in 1803 it was condemned and all available copies seized and destroyed, by order of the First Consul (Bonaparte), who, however, also decreed that two copies of each of such books should be deposited in a special section of the Bibliothèque Nationale, under lock and key, and thus founded the famous *Enfer* of that institution. It probably was not known officially that Restif was the author, for he, quite naturally, had not put his name to it, but published it as by " M. Linguet, avocat," a lawyer who had been an " enemy " of Restif and had been guillotined in 1794, so that he was unable to protest against the ascription, which was perhaps the meanest action of Restif's life. But the latter declared that even this book was published—like all his others—with moral intent—namely, to counteract the cruelty that was such a feature of the works of the Marquis de Sade ! " To supersede *Justine* and make people prefer *L'Anti-Justine*, it is necessary that the latter should surpass the former in voluptuousness, as much as it yields to it in cruelty." And he carried out his intention to the best of his ability—which was considerable.

His writings failing to provide Restif with sufficient to live on, even in his own very modest way, he was compelled to try other means. In October 1796 he addressed to the Directoire an appeal for help, which, mainly due to Carnot, met with some success. In the following month his friend Mercier proposed his election to the Institute. " M. de la Bretonne has genius, but lacks taste," objected the President, La Harpe. " Ah ! messieurs," replied Mercier, " which of us has genius ? " The only two who voted for his election were Mercier and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the author of *Paul et Virginie*. This was another disappointment to Restif. " It is well known that the *Institut National* was established to serve as a retreat for genuine men of letters. I am most assuredly more truly so than such as Fontanes, or Ginguenet or Millin or Sélis or fifty others of the same stamp. . . . Such are the people who have excluded Genius, crushed

under a weight of misfortune and old age, from the *Institut National!* It is impossible to describe with what savagery men without title or merit, mere drones, have expelled the industrious bees and deprived honest men of the subsistence which the nation meant to assure to them."

Late in 1797 the Department of l'Allier (that in which Vichy is situated), made a clearance in the offices of public administration, and in the process four Professors in the Central School of the Department at Moulins were dismissed, including the Professor of History. The vacant posts were to be filled by competition, and Restif took part in that for the chair of History. In compliance with the rules, he sent in a memorial, containing a plan of teaching and his views on general history. The members of the committee charged with the selection from the candidates unanimously chose Restif's memorial as superior to those of all his rivals. "The scheme of instruction of the Citizen Retif-La Bretonne," the committee reported, "although only given in outline, is none the less remarkable for the noble views which it contains, the enlightened principles it sets forth, upon ancient as well as modern history, its good and scholarly style, and the sound morals and political opinions of the author. It inspires the greatest confidence and shows the greatest talents." And so in May 1798 he was appointed Professor of History at Moulins. This is not really so unexpected as at first sight it appears. In many of his works there is a considerable knowledge of history to be observed, and a general grasp and understanding of it. Particularly is this exemplified in his lengthy account of Jeanne d'Arc in *La Prévention Nationale* (1784), which will be dealt with later. But Restif never went to fill the post he had thus gained. After waiting until October 1799 for his arrival, the Administrative Assembly of the Department recorded that "more than seventeen months have elapsed since the Citizen Retif La Bretonne was officially notified of his nomination without him presenting himself to fulfil his

functions," and after this generously long delay they appointed somebody else in his place. He had probably forgotten to let them know that he had found other employment, which saved him from leaving Paris, where he greatly preferred to remain.

A friend of recent date, named Lecomte, knowing the desperate circumstances in which Restif now was, showed his sincerity and admiration by appointing him to a place which he had at his disposal in the office of the Secret Police, the salary of which was 4,000 francs, and to take effect from April 20th, 1798. Thus was Restif relieved from abject poverty for the next four years. He was appointed to that section of the Police bureau, commonly known as the *Cabinet Noir*, which dealt with letters intercepted from abroad, and Restif had special charge of those in Spanish and Italian. We have already seen that he had published in 1776 *Fin Matois*, which was a translation from the Spanish of Quevedo, though in that case the translation had originally been done by somebody else, and Restif had revised it. It is obvious, however, that he must have had some knowledge of these languages, or he would never have been appointed to that position. The number of letters dealt with was considerable, and Restif had eight or nine assistants under him. Grasilier, in his book on Restif (1927) advanced a theory that he had already been in the employ of the Secret Police some thirty years earlier, precisely at the period when, on becoming an author, he threw up his work as a printer, and that this would account for his frequent nocturnal rambles of which the literary result was *Les Nuits de Paris*. But this theory has not obtained credence, and I agree with Funck-Brentano who rejects it, and especially with Tabarant, who shows the extreme improbability of it and the complete lack of evidence for it and for most of the statements newly advanced by Grasilier, whose knowledge of Restif, he declares, was "ultra-summary." Tabarant himself has made an interesting and important discovery connected with this

appointment in 1798, for in the course of his studies in the archives, he came across a dossier dated " 21 Frimaire an Sept.," headed " Deuxième Division—Lettres Interceptées," in which appear these two names in close conjunction in a list of salaries : " 4,000 francs—Restif, sous-chef. Traducteur de langue Espagnole ; 1,800 francs Augé, expéditionnaire de 3me. classe." Augé, his vindictive ex-son-in-law, copying-clerk of the lowest class (as he always had been), in the same office and under the orders of Restif as Sub-Chief ! Tabarant proves that this could only have been the Augé that we know, who probably obtained this appointment through the influence of his father, who held an official position and knew Lecomte. Restif could not have been pleased at this re-encounter, but time had probably softened their previous mutual animosity, and Mme. Agnès Augé had now been Mme. Vignon for four years. But the important point of this discovery is that it disposes once and for all of the fantastic story which had been current in all accounts of Restif at least since the *Biographie Universelle* of Michaud (1836) right down to Funck-Brentano (1928) which states that on June 30th, 1793, Augé, armed with a dagger, attempted to assassinate his mother-in-law, Agnès Lebègue, and for this offence was arrested, tried and guillotined. This story has persisted until now, in spite of the fact that Restif's grandson, Victor Vignon, in *La Presse* of September 27th, 1836, contradicted it. Some biographers even went further, and took the epilogue of *Ingénue Saxoncour* literally, and told how Ingénue-Agnès was killed by her husband, and the criminal arrested and sent to a penal colony where he ended his days ! Thus were some of Restif's embellishments taken as facts, as has also been the case with regard to the Marquis de Sade.

In 1802 Lecomte was no longer there, and the former Minister of Police, Dondeau, had been replaced by Fouché, who gave to one of his own nominees, Desmarest, the task of reorganising the service. The *Cabinet Noir* was

abolished, and consequently Restif lost his employment. Desmarest proposed that on account of his age and infirmities and the position that he had attained in the literary world, Restif should be given a job in the Archives, but economy was the rule then in favour and Fouché was never tender-hearted. In June 1802 Restif was " suppressed," and as indemnity received his salary for the current month and the one following. Once again he was without resources, and was now approaching his seventieth year.

In this year the last of Restif's books to be printed during his lifetime appeared—*Les Posthumes*, at first called *Lettres du Tombeau*. It consists of " Letters received after the death of her husband by his wife who believed him to be in Florence," and is concerned with the survival of the soul after death. Restif published it as being by the late Jacques Cazotte, author of *Le Diable Amoureux*, who had been guillotined in 1792, but this is, of course, a *supercherie littéraire*, and it did not prevent the book from being suppressed by the authorities on the grounds of immorality and " revelations concerning a person related to the Government "—the Comtesse de Beauharnais. It is said that this lady soon afterwards obtained the relaxation of this prohibition, but it was too late and the damage had already been done. The sales never recovered and it fell flat. As Restif was depending on this book to supply his means of existence after the loss of his job, it was a sad blow to him, and his health was rapidly becoming worse with advancing years. He published two volumes entitled *Les Nouvelles Contemporaines* (1802), but they are mainly composed of material collected and re-arranged from previous books, especially *Monsieur Nicolas*.

There is in existence some correspondence between Restif and a young married woman in Grenoble, Mme. Fontaine, who, with her husband, was a great admirer of Restif's work. They never met, but the lady sent him some small sums of money on learning of his poverty. This was in 1797–98, just before he was appointed to the

Cabinet Noir, and he finally writes to her about his satisfaction at obtaining that post. We learn from his letters that, as usual, he was unhappy in his domestic life. No longer having his wife to throw the blame upon, he now complains bitterly of his daughter, Marion, calling her " a domestic fury," " a harpy " and similar names, quite in the old style of how he used to speak of Agnès Lebègue. A more attractive glimpse of Restif is afforded by a young German woman, Helmina von Chézy, who played a part in the German romantic movement, and who met him at the house of the Comtesse de Beauharnais in 1802. Amongst all the celebrated writers whom she met it was Restif who made the greatest impression on her. " He was the most genial of all," she writes. " There was something winning and attractive in his appearance. He was of fairly good height, rather plump, and wore his hair like Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, in natural curls falling on his neck ; his face was oval, the nose of a harmonious line, the mouth of an agreeable expression, the large eyes expressive with a bright and affectionate look ; his sweet and gentle voice went to the heart. He was as charming to me as a man in the decline of life can be to a young girl. I would gladly have seen him often, but the anathema pronounced by the world frightened me away. Oh, the world, how willingly and hastily it condemns ! "

The few remaining years were a period of decline in every way, physically, mentally, financially—everything. In November 1803 he appealed to Réginer, who had succeeded Fouché, for assistance. " It is very cold, and I have nothing with which to warm myself," he writes pathetically. " I am writing a memoir on Africa, which I hope to present to the First Consul, concerning different subjects that are important to the Republic." Four months later he was granted a sum of fifty livres. In May 1804 the First Consul became Napoleon I, and Restif's friend, the Comtesse de Beauharnais was now the aunt of an Empress. But Restif was no longer able

to visit her. By 1805 he had become practically bedridden. He was afflicted with hernia, gastric troubles and inflammation of the urinary organs, the results of many earlier venereal infections. He was tended by his daughters, his grandchildren and a young doctor and specialist in such diseases, Jacques-Louis Nauche, who had been sent to him by the Comtesse de Beauharnais. He was rapidly failing, and on February 3rd, 1806, at mid-day, he died in his room at No. 10 Rue de la Bûcherie, in his seventy-second year. The house is still standing, and is now No. 16 in the Rue de la Bûcherie, which is close to the river on the south bank, off the Rue Saint-Jacques, nearly opposite Nôtre Dame and quite near to his beloved Ile Saint-Louis. He was buried two days later in the cemetery of Sainte-Catherine in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, which in 1824 was included in the large cemetery of Montparnasse, and the grave of Restif is no longer known. Before the burial there was a funeral service in Nôtre Dame. M. Maurice Heine possesses one of the tickets of invitation to the ceremony. Its size is 260 × 365 mm., and it reads as follows: "Vous êtes priés, d'assister aux convoi, service et enterrement de Mr. Nicolas-Edme Restif-de-la-Bretone, Homme de Lettres, décédé en sa maison rue de la Bûcherie, No. 10; Qui se feront mardi 4 (this has been crossed out and 'mercredi 5' written above it) Février 1806, à midi précis, en l'Église de Nôtre-Dame, sa Paroisse. DE PROFUNDIS. De la part de Mmes. ses filles, de Mrs. ses petits-fils, de Mlles. ses petites-filles, et de Mr. Vignon, son gendre." And added in writing: "et de Mmes. ses Soeurs." It is issued by the "Administration Générale des Inhumations et Pompes Funèbres de la Ville de Paris, rue Culture Sainte-Catherine, No. 13." It is said that 1800 people followed the body to the cemetery, amongst whom were several persons of distinction. The Institute which had refused to admit him as a member sent a deputation, and Fontanes, President of the Corps Législatif—whom Restif had described as a scoundrel—was one of the pall-bearers.

The obituary notices were very luke-warm in tone and rather contemptuous.

It will be noticed that his wife was not amongst those who issued the invitation to the funeral. Where she was at this time we do not know, but when, some five years later, Cubières-Palmézeaux published his *Notice Historique et Critique sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Restif de la Bretonne*, he printed in the Preface the following letter, which is dated Paris, October 18th, 1806.

" I am too charmed, Monsieur, by the honour which you have done me in asking me for some interesting details that can be included in the account of my late husband (which, happily for his family, you have undertaken), not to readily respond. But misfortunes, which no human prudence could foresee having separated me from that man of talent in 1784, I cannot give myself the great pleasure that I should have had in singing his praises, if the demon of discord had not poisoned with his foul breath the spirit of that naturally good man. That was the reason why, during twenty-six years, I had knowledge neither of his affairs nor of his conduct : in vain I wrote, my letters were intercepted. Thus, all I can say now is that during all the time that I have spent with him I have had the satisfaction to see in my husband a man very useful to the public, in many ways. I have seen, with admiration, more than twenty fathers of families subsist for a considerable number of years solely by the work which that so hard-working author has procured for them. He always gave preference to fathers and mothers with a numerous family, and above all to the unluckiest ones, for he was extremely charitable. If an old man or woman asked him for alms, he would take them to a little inn and give them a meal and a half-litre of wine. If he ever refused an aged man, it was only because he had no money on him. It was equally unlucky for the poor as for himself that his affairs turned out badly : but unfortunately, as he had put all his patrimony into the printing of his works, he found him-

self ruined by *assignats* and other causes which he could not guarantee by his great kindness.

" I greatly wish, Monsieur, that one could extract the spirit of his very numerous works, which would surely become very precious to the public, when the genius and the taste of MM. Palmézeaux and Mercier have added a new value to it. If I had the wit and the genius of Mme. la Comtesse Fanny de Beauharnais, I would offer you my services ; but, to do myself justice, I have only to offer you the regrets which cause my incapacity, as also the testimony of the respectful esteem with which I have the honour to be, etc.

" Veuve Restif, née Lebègue."

Signed thus, ignoring the divorce which she had obtained twelve years previously ! Funck-Brentano goes into ecstasies over this letter, as a model of forgiveness and the supreme tribute to and rehabilitation of Restif. Tabarant, on the other hand, summarily dismisses it as false in sentiment and evidence of a complete insensibility on the part of the writer. I am inclined to agree with Tabarant. All we know of Agnès Lebègue is that she died in 1810, likewise in her seventy-second year. She had become partly reconciled with her daughters, but not sufficiently so for either of them to have her to live with them.

The last work of Restif to be published was *Histoire des Compagnes de Maria*, which appeared in 1811. The character of the heroine is based upon the Comtesse de Beauharnais. At his death he had no less than twenty-eight other works in mind, which he intended to write, and some of which he had started. But the active and indefatigable pen was stilled for ever. Actually, he had published but little, and that of no real value or importance, since *Monsieur Nicolas* in 1797.

In the later years of his life, Restif had lost all interest in or care for his personal appearance. He had bought no new clothes for twenty-three years, and bothered not at all about cleanliness. What a contrast to the boy at Sacy, who was known amongst his companions as

Monsieur Nicolas, because of his immaculate appearance ! But up to the last years, he apparently was not unattractive. Cubières has given this description of him as he was when he first met him.

" Restif de la Bretonne was of medium height, that is to say about five feet two ; he had a high, bare forehead, big dark eyes which showed the fire of genius, an aquiline nose, small mouth, very dark eyebrows which, in his old age, descended over his eyelids, forming a singular mixture between an eagle and an owl. I have seen him in the summer working at his printing-press in the clothes of a workman, and therefore with his chest uncovered ; it was as hairy as that of a bear, which is a sign of strength. Restif de la Bretonne, in fact, was born strong and vigorous ; he was sober and hard-working, no one could be more so. There never was, in his youth, a more robust man than he. The general effect of his face was admirable. A highly respectable lady, seeing him for the first time in his old age, cried : ' Oh ! what a fine head ! ' and asked permission to kiss him. Restif de la Bretonne did not require to be asked a second time. The description that I have given of his physique is slight and fleeting ; but to end it I will say that Restif had the finest head in the world, and that he was a Hercules, morally as well as physically."

I have dwelt at greater length on the earlier years of Restif than on the later, as the periods of adolescence and youth seem to me to be the most formative and explain much of what follows. After 1785 the story of his life becomes much more confused and difficult to follow—the last ten years are sad, and show a steady decline. " The eccentricities of his ill-balanced temperament were becoming more pronounced," says Havelock Ellis. " His estimate of his own genius went on increasing as well as his bitterness with the world that failed to appreciate his greatness. . . . In spite of all, there was evidently something attractive and winning in Monsieur Nicolas, whether it was his child-like and helpless abandonments

or the fire of genius in his eyes. However morose he grew in disposition, however objectionable in appearance, there were always friends to love and tend him, themselves rather eccentric people sometimes, but not seldom people of refinement and intellect." I venture to think that he is a character of considerable interest, worth the studying. In the above account of his life, I have left out at least as much detail as I have included, and one could write another study of him of equal length with hardly any repetition. But I have endeavoured to include all the essentials. It has been written of Restif :—

> " Son esprit, libre et fier, sans guide, sans modèle,
> Même alors qu'il s'égare, étonne ses rivaux ;
> Amant de la nature, il lui dut ses pinceaux,
> Et fut simple, inégal et sublime comme elle."

In the following parts of this study, I propose to deal with his works, and conclude with general considerations of his character and personality, surroundings and standing.

PART II

THE WORKS

DEDIÉ A MONSIEUR
Tresorier général des

BOURGEVIN DE NORVILLE
Maréchaussées de France.

N° 47

Boucherum l'an. Sculpsit avec Privilege du Roy.

Par son très humble très obeissant
Serviteur. Demarteau l'aine

I

THE LESSER WORKS

THE complete works of Restif de la Bretonne fill more than two hundred volumes. He did not publish his first book till he was thirty-three years of age, and they were all written in practically the next thirty years. Perhaps no other author has published so much, with the exception of Dumas *père*, and in his case it is well known that many of the lesser books appearing under his name were actually written by his " young men " and he merely autographed them, whereas all of Restif's enormous output was undoubtedly written by himself. Naturally, in such a vast amount there is great inequality. Nobody has ever professed to have read the *whole* of Restif, and some of his books are now extremely difficult to find. Many of his lesser works are of no importance or interest whatever, and some are practically unreadable now. It has been truly said of Restif's books that " there are some which, the more one determines to read them, the more surely one fails, for their futility and solemn nonsense increase with every page."

This being so, it is not proposed to deal here at any length with all of his works, but to devote our main attention to the five or six principal ones, and refer but shortly to most of the others. His best books are considered to be the following :—

(i) *Monsieur Nicolas ;*
(ii) *Le Paysan Perverti ;*
(iii) *La Paysanne Pervertie ;*
(iv) *Les Nuits de Paris ;*
(v) *Les Contemporaines ;*
(vi) *La Vie de Mon Père.*

As we have seen, Restif began to write at a very early

age—poems, plays, translations and so forth, but none of these showed any precocious talent, and were such as many boys perpetrate in their schooldays, and were rightly destroyed. All through his life, his attempts at poetry and drama were of the feeblest kind, and none of his plays ever attained performance on the stage, in spite of his strenuous efforts in that direction.

It was not until 1767 that he first appeared in print, with *La Famille Vertueuse*, in four volumes. This obtained no more success than it deserved. Restif received 750 livres for it. As we have seen, he was originally prompted to the composition of this, his first book, by proof-reading, in the course of his work as printer, some novels of Mme. Riccoboni and Mme. Benoit, which at that time were popular and which he thought he could at least equal, or even improve upon. He conformed to the prevailing fashion of writing the book in the form of letters, and added the sub-title *Lettres traduites de l'Anglais* par M. de la Bretone. " I so much enjoyed writing the letters which compose the four parts of the book that I gave every moment at my disposition to them," he tells us. For nearly all his books, Restif declares that he needed to be inspired by the thought of some girl for whom he had conceived a passion. In this case it was Rose Bourgeois, to whom he had never spoken, but one of his chief reasons for writing it was to impress her and her father with his worthiness. The book actually consists of eight more or less separate stories, which were suggested by incidents that he had observed and then enlarged upon and embroidered. There is no striking originality or merit about it, but it was a beginning. " I was drunk with joy at seeing myself in print," he says ingenuously. " I thought myself very rich ! I had never owned so large a sum of money. I supervised the printing of it myself, both as foreman and author." He received more money for this book than he did for the immediately succeeding ones. It spurred him on to further efforts. But he says of it himself : " My style, in this work, is not yet my own ;

I forced myself to imitate that of the books which I had read, especially those of Mme. Riccoboni." This is not only true of Restif's first book, but also applies to most of those published during the next eight years, with the exception of the two "social studies" of that period. Indeed, it was not until *Le Paysan Perverti* that he really developed a manner of his own and began to follow it freely. Of the intervening works, *Lucile, ou les Progrès de la Vertu* (1768) is negligible. Published as by "Un Mousequetaire" it is the story of a young girl who ran away with one of her father's clerks, much below her in station; they are pursued and overtaken at Lille, in Flanders, and she is brought back and later suitably married. The facts on which it was based were related to him by his half-brother, the Abbé Thomas, when he saw him on his visit home in 1767. There is not much scope here for originality, and he himself describes it as a "bagatelle." It was in one volume and sold at fifteen cents a copy; he only received three louis for it. The author says that he tried to write it in the manner of *L'Ingénu* of Rousseau, and that he completed the two hundred pages in five days. He afterwards used the same story in one of the episodes of *Les Contemporaines*.

In the following year appeared *Le Pied de Fanchette, ou l'Orpheline Française*, in three volumes. It is an improvement on what had gone before and is one of the two best of the early works. It is a rather simple story of a young orphan girl who is submitted to many attempts at seduction, all of which she successfully resists and eventually marries the young man of her choice. Parts of it are lively and entertaining, but it is too long for the slightness of its subject. It is the tiny foot and the dainty shoe that is the chief of all Fanchette's attractions. Here we have a reasonably restrained example of the author's foot and shoe fetishism. He describes the inception of the book as follows: "I was walking down the Rue Tiquetonne one Sunday morning on my way to see Renaud, when I noticed a pretty girl in a milliner's shop at the

corner of the Rue Montorgeuil, where there is now a café. She was still in her simple bodice and with it she wore a white petticoat, silk stockings, and pink slippers with those high slender heels which become the female leg so infinitely better than the present fashion. I was enchanted, and, stopping in front of the door, stared at her with my mouth open (her back was turned to me). At last one of her companions spoke to her, and she looked round blushing. ' Gad, how appetising you are ! ' I said, and went my way. As I walked I composed the first chapter of the book : ' I was the true historian of the brilliant conquests of the little foot of a pretty girl,' etc. I put pen to paper the next day. When I found my imagination cooling somewhat I went out to look at my Muse again. In the Rue Saint-Denis, opposite the Fontaine des Innocents, I saw a woman whose feet were a prodigy of miniature beauty ; also she was shod in pretty gold brocade slippers made by the cleverest craftsman in the capital. I followed her until she entered the Church of the Sepulchre, and I then returned home full of inspiration ; in two days I had got to Chapter XIV." He made a vow not to shave his beard until the book was finished. He completed it in eleven days. It had more success than his previous ones, and sold at the rate of fifty copies a day, which was a considerable sale for that time. But the publisher reaped the benefit of it, and not Restif himself. It was published anonymously.

La Confidence Nécessaire, ou Lettres de Lord Austin de Norfolk à Lord Humfrey de Dorset (1769), in two volumes, had " par N. E. Rétif-de-la-Bretone " on the title-page. It is the most " free " of his earlier books, and is the first to be based upon actual experiences of his own, as became his custom, though the facts are altered. According to him it " depicts the state of my emotions when, in my early youth, I was in love with several girls at the same time. As a story it is not true, but it is a faithful picture of a real situation," and again, " it is not a history, but a ' Castle in Spain ' of what might have

been." One of the characters in the book, " Frank," is François Courtcou, and the chief interest in it is the " Irish " tale of *O-Ribo*, which is an elaboration of one of the licentious stories which Courtcou used to tell to Restif when they were minding the sheep together in the pastures at Sacy in the old days. This story is in the style of Crébillon *fils* or the Abbé Voisenon, but is even more erotic than theirs. The man through whom he published it, Kolmann, never paid him for it, and Restif himself did not receive a penny for it.

La Fille Naturelle, two volumes, was published in the same year. While Restif was working at the press, printing *La Confidence*, an old acquaintance of his from Auxerre, who was supplying the paper for that book, happened to call to see him, and told him a moving story about a wealthy father who had given alms to his natural daughter without recognising her as such, which so fired his imagination that he there and then began on it. Writing at a case in the printing room, he completed the book in eight days. Parts of it he even composed straight on to the press, without manuscript. Another instance of this was in the last part of Monsieur *Nicolas*, when he was in haste to publish that work to relieve his desperate state of poverty at the time. It is a remarkable accomplishment to be able to do such a thing, but naturally does not improve the literary quality of the work so produced. *La Fille Naturelle* remained the author's own favourite amongst all his books. It strikes us in a less favourable light to-day, and is all but unreadable. But its sale equalled that of *Fanchette*, though, according to Restif, he made hardly anything out of it.

Of the six other earlier works, apart from the two " social studies," there is but little that need be said. These are *Le Marquis de T . . .* (Tavan), *ou l'École de la Jeunesse* (4 vols., 1771), *Adèle de Com . . .* (Comminge), *ou Lettres d'une Fille à son Père* (5 vols., 1772), *La Femme dans les Trois États de Fille, d'Épouse et de Mère* (3 vols., 1773), *Le Ménage Parisien, ou Déliée et Sotentout* (2 vols., 1773), *Les*

Nouveaux Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité (2 vols., 1774), and *Le Fin Matois, ou Histoire du Grand Taquin, traduite de l'Espagnol, de Quévédo* (3 vols., 1776).

The first of these he had begun to write in the dovecote at Sacy, and then given it up. He now completed it, and it was refused by several publishers before it eventually appeared. It may be regarded as a mere " pot-boiler." It fell flat, and was never reprinted. It is therefore, like *Lucile*, now one of the rarest of all Restif's works. The one amusing point about it to be noted is that the hero is a Marquis, the heroine is named Justine, and the other chief female character is the Comtesse Juliette. But as this was twenty years before the notorious work of the Marquis de Sade, it is merely a remarkable coincidence. The author himself spoke of it to a friend as a " detestable book."

The second of the above-mentioned books is again in the form of letters, and is of no interest, apart from the fact that in the last volume, which is made up of miscellaneous short pieces, appeared the *Contr'avis aux Gens-de-lettres*. This is a reply to the *Avis aux Gens-de-lettres* of Fenouillot de Falbaire, and in it Restif strenuously upholds the rights of authors, and violently denounces the " piracies " of the publishers of Lyon, Rouen and Bordeaux. It shows Restif in his best reforming mood, and is a fine piece of invective. In another of these miscellanies, *Réflections sur l'Ambigucomique*, he attacks Audinot, the director, and thus gives vent to his feelings about the non-acceptance of his plays and his failure to obtain an engagement as an actor.

The third book is entirely insignificant, and is another of the " unreadables." *Le Ménage Parisien* is the best of this lot, and in fact one of the brightest things that Restif ever wrote, though he himself judged it rather severely. " The plot was excellent," he says, " and had appealed to me, but the development of it proved to be beyond my powers, and this, my pleasantest conception, only produced a very mediocre book." The first part is an

amusing story of the life and manners of some of the Paris *bourgeoisie*, done with a certain amount of verve and caricature. The second part is a satire on most of the best-known men of letters of the time, and on the *Institut*. Thus, Beaumarchais, Crébillon *fils*, Fréron, Piron, Mercier, l'Abbé Voisenon, and others appear under thinly disguised names, and they form the *Académie Qui-perd-gagne*. Crébillon, as censor, passed the book for publication, and, of course, recognised the portrait of himself, and was merely amused by it. Another writer, upon hearing that all well-known authors were satirised in it, rushed round in a fury to the publisher to protest, but on being told that he did not appear in it at all, was even more furious. There is also a eulogy of Restif's doctor, de Préval. In short, it is highly topical.

Les Nouveaux Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité is a medley of but little interest. The censor Marchand, of whom we shall hear more shortly, had started to write a romance called *Les Mémoires de M. d'Armantières*, inspired by the *Mémoirs d'un Homme de Qualité* of the Abbé Prévost, which had appeared in 1729 and the last part of which contained the immortal *Manon Lescaut*. The titular hero began life towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV, and living to a considerable age, was to bring his story down to within living memory. But Marchand could not complete it, and he handed it to Nougaret to finish. The latter did nothing with it, and passed it on to Restif, who re-wrote much of it, introduced several short stories of his own invention, brought it to a conclusion, and published it under the title here given. Restif asserts that three-quarters of the whole book was his own. In any case, the result is poor and the title reminiscent of Prévost's book merely invites an unfortunate comparison.

Le Fin Matois was, as we have seen, a translation from the Spanish of Quevedo, which was actually the work of the censor d'Hermilly, but it now appeared with " Notes historiques et politiques nécessaires pour la parfaite intelligence de cet auteur," which are by Restif. Indeed, Restif

says that he corrected the translation by comparison with the original, added seven chapters of his own at the end, and wrote the Preface, the Notice on the Inquisition and all the Notes. It is of no importance amongst Restif's works.

These, then, are all Restif's productions of the pre-*Paysan* period, with two important exceptions. Of these eleven books, the only two of any interest now are *Le Pied de Fanchette* and *Le Ménage Parisien*, and they are but minor works. The two exceptions are *Le Pornographe* and *La Mimographe*.

Restif had a high opinion of himself as a social reformer, and there is no doubt that his intentions were excellent, if not always practicable. To inform the world of the ideas he had conceived and which he advocated for the general good, he decided to write a series of social studies on aspects of life where he considered there was room for much improvement. His general title for these was *Les Idées Singulières*, but for the sake of convenience they may be called the " graphes," and he intended to write more of them than he actually did. The best of the series is the first one, *Le Pornographe*, which appeared in 1769, and deals with prostitution. He began to work on it immediately after the completion of his first book, but it was not published till two years later. He tried to write it when he visited his home in 1767 and worked in the dovecot there, but he found that in those surroundings he had " embarked upon the wrong kind of book. Curiously enough, I found it quite impossible to work at my *Pornographe* in Sacy." When he returned to Paris he resumed and completed it, but then he had trouble in getting it passed for publication by the censor. He had entirely re-written it, but it was refused a permit by the first censor to whom it was submitted. Then, through a friend, he got it passed by Marchand, whom I have mentioned above as the author of *Mémoires de M. d'Armantières*. The book was then printed, but just as it was going to be put on sale Marchand withdrew his permit. But at

last, through the good offices of another friend, he was induced to reconsider the matter, and eventually the book appeared. It was a great success and sold well, probably on account of its title and the subject with which it dealt. Cubières says that it was the first of Restif's works which had a marked success, and his friend Boudard, on its appearance, embraced the author and exclaimed, " A book at last, and not another pamphlet . "

In *Le Pornographe* Restif defends the utility, even necessity, of houses of prostitution, and asserts that the inmates of them should not be regarded with the contempt and obloquy with which they generally were. " The labouress is worthy of her hire " sort of idea. Prostitution should be confined to the houses specially allocated to that purpose, and should not be allowed to be practised in the open streets and in public places. The elaborate series of rules and regulations for these houses which he describes, including strict official supervision, rates of payment, method of procedure and mode of life and conditions for the inmates, he ascribes to an entirely fictitious Englishman, named Lewis Moore. A " pornograph," according to Restif, is a student of prostitution. The necessity for such establishments once granted, there is much to be said in favour of many of his ideas concerning them, but most of the things he advocates are too idealistic and hardly practicable. These houses were to be known as " Parthenions," so as not to offend delicate ears by the use of vulgar words. In after years, Restif often asserted that the Emperor Joseph II adopted the proposals for the regulation of prostitution as advocated in this book, in Vienna. There is no more foundation of fact in this statement than there is in the similar one that Prince Lubomirski likewise introduced the theatrical reforms described in *La Mimographe* into Poland, and the forty-two editions of *Le Paysan Perverti* which he declared had been published in England. Restif no doubt honestly believed these things himself, but they simply were not true.

The second of these studies was *La Mimographe*, which

appeared in the following year (1770), and deals with reforms in the theatre—what little interest it has to-day is provided by the many details it gives about the theatre as it was in Paris at the end of Louis XV's reign, which are not to be found anywhere else. It is a painstaking work, fully documented, but provides dull reading.

It may be as well to deal shortly here with the other "graphes." *Les Gynographes, ou Idées de Deux Honnêtes-Femmes sur un Projet de Règlement proposé à toute l'Europe pour mettre les Femmes à leur place, et opérer le bonheur des Deux sexes*, published 1776 and dated 1777, deals with the position of women. According to the author, "the first part of this work contains a plan for the reform of the manners and usage of the second sex; the second part is a compilation of the uses and all the customs of the world relating to women." That sufficiently describes it. This book was written under the influence of Restif's quarrels with his wife. Like the previous one, it is fully documented and is the result of much industry, but it is dead.

L'Andrographe (1782) was first intended to be called *L'Anthropographe, ou l'Homme réformé*, and is concerned with numerous reforms which Restif considered would be conducive to "the happiness of the Human Race." *Le Thesmographe* (1789) advocates a general reform of the Laws. Dedicated to the States-General, it was ignored by the law-makers of the Revolution, and was more or less stillborn. In publishing this book Restif announced that it was to be followed by *Le Glossographe, ou la Langue réformé*, containing a whole system for the reform of the language and orthography, but this never appeared, and all that we have of it is a fragment in *Mes Ouvrages* in the sixteenth volume of *Monsieur Nicolas*. As for the so-called *L'Educographe*, on the reform of education, this eventually appeared as *Le Nouvel Emile, ou l'Education Pratique* in 1770, and in its final form as *L'École des Pères* in 1776. A few parts of it are readable, and are very highly praised by Funck-Brentano, but by far the greater part of it is very poor stuff.

It may be said of all these " graphes " that they are definitely to be classed amongst the inferior works of Restif, and the first of them is the only one that is of any interest to-day, and is by far the best. Lacroix evolves a theory that they are not by Restif himself, but were written by various writers who gave them to him to publish under his own name. Tabarant shows the falsity of this theory. Funck-Brentano has well said, relative to these " graphes " : " The *réformomanie* of Restif—the word is his own—is here given full scope. One may note, on this subject, as also applying to Jean-Jacques Rousseau with whom Restif had so much in common, that it is generally those people who are incapable of managing themselves and their affairs who are obsessed with the mania—at least Restif applies that expression to himself—of reforming humanity." In spite of his intentions, the influence of Restif as a social reformer was nil, and his works of this nature are so much limbo.

We will now briefly consider the lesser works of the post-*Paysan* period, which are many, and at least three are of some interest.

Le Quadragénaire, ou l'Homme de XL Ans, 2 volumes, 1777, is chiefly remarkable for being the first of Restif's works to contain illustrations, which were afterwards to become such a feature of his books. This was suggested by the Widow Duchesne, who published so many of his books, and the idea was eagerly welcomed by him. The Widow recommended a young artist of twenty-four, named André Dutertre, who provided all the fifteen illustrations except the frontispiece, which was by Baquoy, a specialist in that kind of work. They were engraved by Berthet, and proved a great success. As regards the book itself, Restif had previously developed a habit of writing letters to some girls in a milliner's shop, by whom he was attracted, and these letters caused much amusement and enjoyment to the recipients " As for me," he says, " I found this such an agreeable pastime that it became my sole recreation. My letters contained sound morality ; no method of

seduction was used in them ; I entertained some pretty children without danger to themselves ; I took and gave some innocent recreation. I found ample material for my letters in the conduct suitable to young persons, lightening my dissertations with little stories, of which I would give them the equivalent of about three printed pages one evening, and the continuation on the next. My *Quadragénaire* is entirely composed of these little stories, but for publication I detached them from their context, only including one or two of the shortest of my letters to these young girls, under the title of *L'Amour par Lettres*—a title which my *Nouvel Abeilard*, composed in the following year, satisfied much more completely."

Thus we see the foundation of *Le Nouvel Abeilard, ou Lettres de deux amans qui ne sont jamais vus*, 4 volumes, 1778, was really the same as that of the previous work. The title was suggested by *La Nouvelle Héloise* of Rousseau. In this book again Restif was inspired by a pretty foot and a dainty shoe, but on the whole, it is a mediocre work. Lovers who have never seen each other are hardly an inspiring theme. There were ten illustrations.

Rather better is *La Malédiction Paternelle : Letters sincères véritables de N . . . à ses Parens, ses Amis et ses Maîtresses, avec les Réponses*, 3 volumes, 1780. The chief interest of this book is autobiographical. Lacroix expresses the opinion that the first half is admirable, and worthy of Rousseau, but Tabarant says that this only makes one think he had never read it. There is a frontispiece to each volume by Binet, and this is apparently the first association of that excellent artist with Restif.

La Découverte Australe, ou L'Homme volant, 4 volumes, 1781, contains twenty-three illustrations, not by Binet, and not signed. This is one of the earliest books in which aeronautics appear, for Restif sends his hero to the other side of the world by a flying-machine. It is probable that this was suggested to him by the English book, *The Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, which had been translated into French. But Restif was not so much concerned with

flying as with man in his various stages of development, as were to be found in the Antipodes. It is not a book of adventure in the sense that the English one is—one cannot picture Restif writing a "Jules Verne."

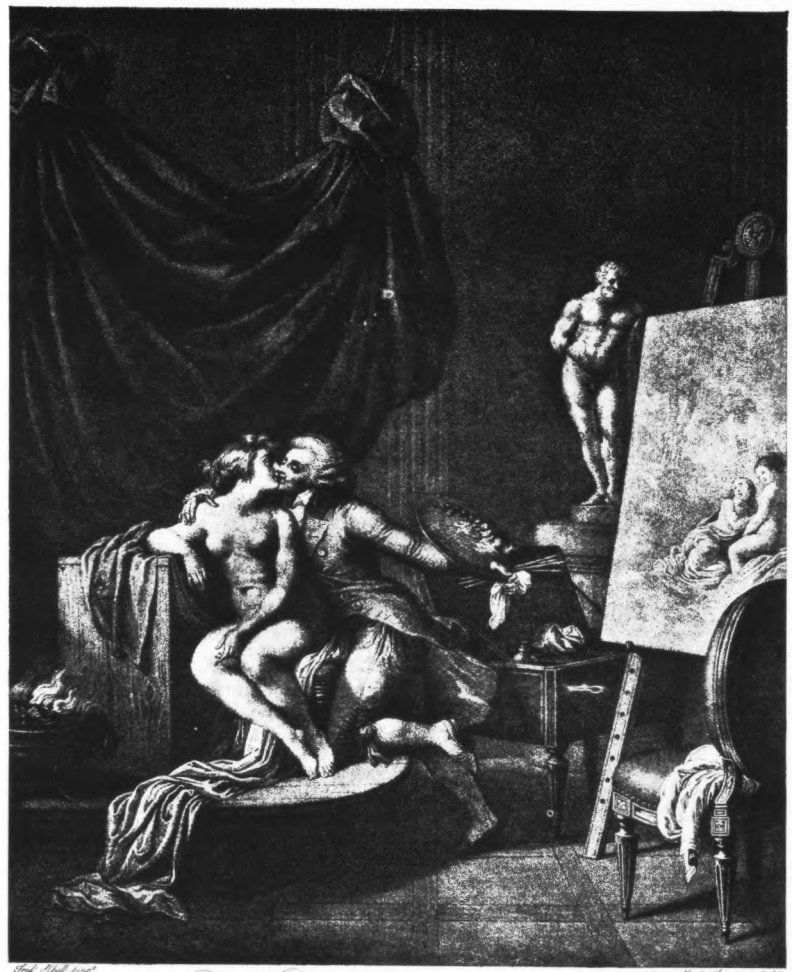
La Dernière Avanture d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq Ans, two parts in one volume, with a frontispiece to each part by Binet, 1783, is actually a detailed account of Restif's love-affair with Sara. Lacroix says of it: "This romance is a masterpiece; it is not a novel, it is a true history, related naïvely and sincerely by him who was the hero of it." It does indeed, in a way, remind one of Proust, in its elaborate analysis of a sentimental yet sensuous *liaison*, with all its joys and miseries, its quarrels and reconciliations, its passions and jealousies, described at great length. A shorter version of the same story is to be found in the twelfth volume of *Monsieur Nicolas*, where the real names are used instead of fictitious ones as here. I think most readers agree that the shorter version is the better one. One of Restif's chief faults was prolixity. It is in the Prologue to this work that Restif says: "Can I convince you that one can perhaps be cajoled by women after one is forty-five, but one can never be loved." He did not always remember this wise maxim himself.

La Prévention Nationale, 3 volumes, 1784, is a miscellaneous collection of writings, the title being that of a play, the idea of which is taken from *La Malédiction Paternelle*, and no less than three variants of it are given. The story is of a musketeer, Dulis, who marries an English girl and thereby brings upon himself the fury of his father, a country gentleman who is blindly prejudiced against the English. Restif himself was, as we have already seen, a keen Anglophil. The book is made up of several letters, documents and various other things, including, strangely enough, a lengthy study of Jeanne d'Arc. This has been praised by all critics, and is said to prove that Restif could have been a good historian had he so desired. Even Tabarant says that this study shows him as an accurate, sensitive and charming historian. Lacroix

has pointed out that the only censure of Voltaire's *La Pucelle* on patriotic grounds in the eighteenth century is to be found here. " M. de Voltaire had the weakness to submit to the solicitations of the . . . de . . . (? Marquise de Pompadour) and to write a burlesque poem upon a subject which he should have regarded as sacred." There are five illustrations in each volume, those in the first being particularly charming. They are anonymous, but directly inspired by Binet. Those in the other two volumes are much inferior. The play was reprinted in Restif's *Théâtre*. He condescendingly says of it (writing in 1796), " I intended it to be played at the *Italiens* by the famous actor and dramatist, Granger, but I have taken no steps about it up to the present." Actually, like all his plays, it never was likely to be accepted for production.

Les Veillées du Marais, ou Histoire du grand prince Oribeau, 2 volumes, 1785, is a *roman à clef*, of which he himself has given us the real names in *Mes Ouvrages* and in a note to *Les Nuits de Paris*. Thus, " Oribeaumagne " is Louis XIV, " O-fac-fac " Louis XV, and among many others, " Iratlove " is Voltaire, " Ussuoero " Rousseau, " Toddire " Diderot and " Ibrollenc " Crébillon *fils*. Restif had naïvely intended this work for the education of the Dauphin (son of Louis XVI), and some copies actually appeared with the title *L'Instituteur d'un Prince Royal*. Allusions to the Royal Family are numerous, and naturally all complimentary. But the book failed in its purpose, and Tabarant describes it as " one of the most innocent, if also one of the most boring " of Restif's works. A series of illustrations were done for it by Binet, but for some unknown reason these never appeared.

The next two books to be mentioned are among the very best of Restif's lesser works, and especially interesting from the biographical point of view, but though founded upon his own actual domestic circumstances, facts are distorted, all the colours heightened and purely imaginary incidents and details introduced, so that in reading them one has to remember this all the time. They were pub-



Le Modele disposé

Dessiné par P. A. Baudouin.

Gravé par P. Maleuvre.

LE CURIEUX.

Tiré du Cabinet de Mr. Langlier

Chez l'Auteur rue des Mathurins.

lished anonymously, and for some time Restif refused to acknowledge them as his. There were no illustrations.

The first of them is *La Femme Infidelle, ou La Femme Lettrée*, 4 volumes, 1788. This extraordinary production consists of letters to and from Restif's wife, with others to and from her friends, lovers, relatives and Restif himself, several of which are known to be genuine. In this book, Restif gives full vent to his hatred and spite against Agnès Lebègue, and takes a terrible revenge for all the misery and unhappiness which he asserted she had caused him. It is vitriolic in its malice. It has been called " infamous," " criminal," " devastating," and similar terms. Certainly, his wife is here presented in the blackest colours, a veritable monster. But, in its way, it is well done. In this book Agnès is a character comparable to Mme. de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and Balzac's Mme. Marneffe, if, indeed, she does not surpass them, in her cold calculating deceit, her viciousness, her vindictiveness, her hypocrisy and her utter unscrupulousness, to say nothing of her cupidity. And to have put such a character on paper, with the vividness and reality that it is here, is no mean achievement. Personally, I regard it as one of the best things Restif ever wrote, and if the subject is somewhat painful, disregarding the circumstances of its composition and the underlayer of fact which it contains, as a picture of a thoroughly bad woman it must rank very high. Restif, in *Mes Ouvrages,* says : " I wrote this work in the months of April and May, after the violent crisis which Agnès Lebègue had caused me by her calumnies and her letters against me, which are all here reproduced. The contents of this book are original ; it is composed not only of letters preserved, but also of those which I could reconstruct from memory." It is in these last that the hand of the writer, inspired by detestation and revenge, has added the touches which have created so unforgettable a portrait of sheer wickedness.

A companion book, only less good, is *Ingénue Saxancour, ou la Femme Séparée*, 3 volumes, 1789. This is the story of

Restif's eldest daughter, Agnès, with embellishments, and relates the abominable treatment that she suffered at the hands of her husband, and what she had to endure from her mother. As the previous book was vitriolic against his wife, so is this one against his son-in-law, Augé, of whom, indeed, as we have seen, he had more serious reason to complain, and who appears here under the name of " L'Echiné " (chine of pork). From the literary point of view it is inferior to the *Femme Infidelle*, but is perhaps better as a story. Dumas, or more probably one of his " young men," based one of his lesser novels on it, entitled *L'Ingénue*.

Restif's friends were all rather shocked and horrified by these two books. Bonneville, who was an older and more intimate friend of Restif than Cubières, wrote to the latter, in an article on Restif's works which Cubières printed in his biography, as follows : " Shall I speak of *La Femme Infidelle* and *Ingénue Saxancour*, two books which go together ? God save me from it ! Our dear Nicolas therein discloses all the secrets of his *ménage*, and good heavens ! what secrets ! He does his best to dishonour his wife, whom he could not dishonour, since she has always been virtuous. In the second book, he vomits forth the most atrocious abuse against his son-in-law, to whom he gives the name of *L'Echiné*. These two books, where he gives original letters from his wife, his daughter, his son-in-law, etc., appear to have been composed in an attack of violent fever ; in fact, it could only be a fool or a maniac who could thus dishonour himself in dishonouring his family. Let us, therefore, draw the curtain upon all these turpitudes, and pity the author, who never could, I repeat, have written such books except in a fit of delirium or frenzy." Grimod de la Reynière pointed out to his friend the folly of such publications, where he dishonoured not only his son-in-law, but also his own daughter. " If you knew," he wrote to Restif, " what has been written to me from Paris about them, and by people who do not even know you, you would shudder." And

many others said the same sort of thing. This is probably the reason why Restif for long refused to admit that he had written them, but nevertheless, everybody knew that he had. He even destroyed all the unsold copies when he knew the attitude of his friends. " Restif, indeed," says Lacroix, " has here gone beyond all the bounds of the most brazen cynicism." But ten years later Restif returned to the attack against Augé, in *L'Anti-Justine*, with even more " brazen cynicism."

Also in 1789 appeared the *Monument du Costume physique et moral de la fin du Dix-huitième siècle, ou Tableaux de la Vie*. This was published at Neuwied-sur-le-Rhin, near Coblentz, and contained 26 engravings in large folio size, after Moreau le Jeune and one or two other artists, with 37 pages of text by Restif. These engravings are some of the most beautiful of the eighteenth century, and the book is now much sought after by collectors and fetches very high prices, on their account. The text is insignificant. But Restif later expanded it into two volumes, under the title of *Tableaux de la Vie, ou les Mœurs du Dix-huitième siècle*, with 17 illustrations, the first edition of which is undated, but probably 1790, and the second edition in 1791, published in the same place. The text is mainly suggested by the illustrations. In 1787, also published at Neuwied, though Paris appears on the title-page, there had appeared *Tableaux de la Bonne Compagnie, ou Traits caractéristiques*, two volumes in octavo size, with no author's name, but with 17 illustrations by Moreau le Jeune, which are counted amongst the masterpieces of that fine artist. Restif supplied the text, and wrote the stories, which frequently have no connection with the illustrations. This book circulated only in Germany, and Paris only knew a pirated edition without the illustrations. All these books are noteworthy only for their charming engravings, and Restif's part in them is negligible. They may be classed as " collectors' items," and, as such, are delightful and highly prized for the work of Moreau le Jeune.

Le Drame de la Vie, 5 volumes, 1793, is another of Restif's

miscellanies. Its interest is entirely biographical. The chief item is a piece in dramatic form, in thirteen acts, each act bearing the name of one of Restif's " affairs," such as " Madame Parangon," " Zéphire," " Virginie," and so forth. The work is made up with other pieces, documents, letters and some of his youthful verses. If its literary value is small, its personal interest is considerable. It contains the best-known portrait of Restif, as frontispiece. There is also a list of no less than twenty-eight works " which the author proposes to publish if he lives long enough to finish them," none of which appeared separately, but all of them are worked into the later part of *Les Nuits de Paris*, in abbreviated form.

The *Théâtre* of Restif also was published in 1793, in 5 volumes. Here are collected all Restif's plays, some of which were written as far back as 1770, and *La Prévention Nationale* and those in *Le Drame de la Vie* are also included. Without the latter, there are seventeen plays, many of which had already appeared in Restif's other books. They are of little merit, and, as I have said, none of them ever attained production on the stage.

Perhaps the best of them is *Les Fautes sont personnelles*. It has been said of another, *Le Jugement de Paris*, that it represents Venus, Juno and Minerva talking in the manner of pretentiously refined laundresses. Another one, *Le Libertin Fixé*, was submitted by Restif to Boursaut, director of the Théâtre Molière, who, in 1791, accepted and produced *Oxtiern, ou les Effets du Libertinage* by the Marquis de Sade, but it was refused as " having too much metaphysics."

Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas, 3 volumes, 1796, is another of the " unreadables " amongst Restif's books. It appeared before the last volumes of *Monsieur Nicolas*, as a supposed supplement to that work, but met with no success. Lacroix tries to make out that it was not by Restif, though having " par l'auteur du *Cœur Humain Dévoilé* " on the title-page, but Tabarant protests the extreme improbability of this.

Restif only published one frankly pornographic book, and that was the last but one of his works to be published in his lifetime, when he was in dire poverty and very bad health, a sadly disappointed and disillusioned man, embittered by the lack of recognition which he considered his merits deserved, and now rapidly failing both physically and intellectually, with his best work finished. Cubières says that Restif intended to entirely suppress this book. Is it possible that *Monsieur Nicolas* and the *Philosophie*, having failed to attract the public, Restif, in disgust and desperation, decided that if they would not buy his serious work, he would try them with something obscene and scandalous, many other works of this nature having proved highly successful in the past, especially those of the Marquis de Sade? It seems likely, and if any excuse should be needed for his publishing such a work, this is the only one that can be offered. The book in question is *L'Anti-Justine, ou les Délices de l'Amour, par M. Linguet, avocat*, 2 parts in one volume, 1798. It is difficult to deal with this work in an English book, because of its unmitigated obscenity, but it has several points of interest, which I will attempt to explain.

In the first place, Restif declares that he wrote this book with the highly moral purpose of counteracting the "sadism" of the works of the Marquis de Sade. I have already pointed out that it is at least equally as obscene as the most extreme flights of de Sade in this direction, and it also contains at least one scene of pure "sadism," so it may be said that Restif's claim in this respect hardly holds good.

We have already seen that Restif said that to supersede *Justine* and gain preference for his own book, it was necessary to surpass the former in voluptuousness as much as to cede to it in cruelty. "No one has been more indignant than I have at the works of the infamous de Sade. My object is to compose a more delectable book than his, which wives can read to their husbands (!) . . . I am not sufficiently lacking in sense not to know that the

Anti-Justine is a poison ; will it be the counter-poison to the fatal *Justine ?* " In many of his books Restif has inveighed against the Marquis de Sade and his works. In *Monsieur Nicolas*, speaking of *Le Portier des Chartreux*, *Thérèse Philosophe*, and *La Religieuse en Chemise* and the " sudden access of terrible eroticism " the reading of them produced in him, he proceeds : " But I know a book more dangerous than any I have mentioned, for it stimulates to cruelty : that *Justine*, which Danton used to read to excite himself." Later in the same work there is a long passage on the evil influence of " those execrable books " *Justine* and *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* where, incidentally, mention is made and some details given of a sequel to the latter entitled *La Théorie du Libertinage*, " which has not yet appeared, though I have read it in manuscript. . . . If ever it is published (as I fully expect it to be in this demoralised age) it will make the most infamous villains shudder." It never has appeared, and is not known to exist. A little further on, in a tirade against the immorality and corruption daily to be found in the Palais Royal, he quotes from the *Tableaux de Paris* of his friend Mercier : " Even in Sodom and Gomorrah they would not have read the books that are printed and publicly sold there. *Justine* and *Le Boudoir* are openly displayed upon the outside shelves." Again, in *Les Nuits de Paris*, he refers several times to de Sade. " La Femme vivante disséquée " and " Les Passe-temps du . . . de S." are highly exaggerated versions of the Rose Keller and the cantharides at Marseille episodes, respectively, and probably did much to perpetuate the legends that have so often been related concerning them. In others of his books there are similar references. In spite of what Lacroix says, it is as certain as any negative thing can be, that Restif and de Sade never met, and Tabarant describes Lacroix's suppositions on this point as absurd. But one instinctively feels that there is somehow a kind of possibly unconscious jealousy in Restif's constant derogatory references to the Marquis, which may have been caused

by various reasons. In view of *L'Anti-Justine*, his expressed disapprobation could hardly have been on purely moral grounds, though Restif may have persuaded himself that it was.

To come to the book itself, it is one of the most licentious ever printed. Its main theme is that of incest, which we know was one of Restif's obsessions, and it is here carried to nightmare proportions. And even in such a book as this, he could not refrain from introducing, to a certain extent, circumstances and characters suggested by his own life and surroundings, as was his custom. The " hero," Cupidonnet, is a young peasant born in a village near Reims. (He did not venture to make him born near Auxerre.) This boy " had a weakness for dainty feet and pretty shoes." Restif's sisters, his brothers-in-law, his wife, his daughters and his nieces, all appear under thinly-disguised names. But above all, his son-in-law Augé is presented as a terrible monster of depravity, in the first part as " Vitnègre " and in the second as " Guae," an anagram on his real name. The incident of his young assistant-printer Théodore and his sister and *fiancée*, which I have already mentioned, is brought in and enlarged upon in the most outrageous way. They are here named " Trait-d'Amour," " Minonne " and " Connette."

Tabarant says, very truly, of this book : " If *Justine* is the work of a madman, it is a whole household of lunatics who, in *L'Anti-Justine*, are delirious with lust and give themselves up to acrobatic refinements of lubricity." He also says, less truly, that Restif's book contains " descriptions of scenes of debauchery compared with which those of the horrible *Justine* are chaste fairy-tales," which is an exaggeration in favour of de Sade. Actually, from that point of view, there is little to choose between the two books, though *L'Anti-Justine* contains none of the long " philosophical discussions " of *Justine*. But there is an obscene and blasphemous prayer to the Virgin which is quite in the de Sade manner.

It will be noticed that *L'Anti-Justine* is described as being " by Monsieur Linguet." Simon Nicolas Henri Linguet (whom Restif calls Jean Pierre Linguet) was a well-known lawyer, who had published a few books, and against whom Restif considered that he had a grudge, which he took this despicable means of repaying, a means all the more contemptible in that Linguet had lost his head on the scaffold in 1794, and was therefore unable to protest against or refute the ascription. Restif had begun this book at least as early as 1796, before the publication of *Monsieur Nicolas* was completed, and probably even as far back as soon after the appearance of the first *Justine* in 1791, by which it was directly inspired. At the end of the first part he says that the work was to consist of seven or eight parts of the length of the first one. That is to say, it was to run to about 1,500 pages ! There were to be sixty illustrations. As was his later custom, Restif wrote full descriptions of the 38 illustrations for that part of the book which was written, but these never appeared. Actually, the book only got as far as the first quarter of Part II, and on page 252 stops abruptly with the beginning of a sentence : " Je sors ; elle . . . " On the title-page it states : " Au Palais-Royal ; chez feue la veuve Girouard, très-connue." It was the Widow Girouard who had published de Sade's *Aline et Valcour* in 1793, and from whose establishment *Justine* itself was distributed, and though it had " en Hollande " on the title-page, it probably was actually published by her. It is quite likely that Restif placed the copies of *L'Anti-Justine* with the successors of the Widow Girouard, as that shop had a special clientèle for that kind of thing. In 1803, this book was suppressed and, by special order of Napoleon, then First Consul, all copies in the bookshops, brothels, and wherever they could be found, were seized and destroyed. It has thus become one of the rarest of all books, and not more than seven copies are now known to exist. Four of these are in the Bibliothèque Nationale—when Napoleon started the suppression of this kind of book, he gave orders

that all the copies that could be found should be destroyed, with the exception of two copies of each book, which were to be deposited under lock and key in a special department of the Bibliothèque Nationale. It was thus that was instituted the famous *Enfer* of that great library. One of the copies there is unique, in that it contains two obscene original designs for illustrations, and a quite proper engraving by Binet, which has no connection with the subject of the book. It also has thirty-eight blank leaves, most of them protected by another leaf of tissue paper, obviously for receiving the engravings, and on the back of the half-title is a long manuscript note about the book. In addition, there are three leaves of proofs corrected in the handwriting of Restif himself. The book was first reprinted in 1863, but many suppressions and alterations were made in the text, and this edition is quite worthless. A full and complete reprint appeared in 1864, and there have been some re-impressions of this. A series of thirty-eight obscene etchings were done for the 1864 edition, but very few copies contain these. There are some more recent editions, some of which contain new illustrations. There is also an English translation, dated 1895, which, however, contains nothing to show that it is a translation of this book. The title-page reads : *The Double Life of Cuthbert Cockerton Esq., Attorney-at-Law of the City of London, His History and that of his Daughter and some Curious Anecdotes of other Ladies and their Lovers. From the original MS. dated 1798. Now published for the first time. 250 copies only. Haarlem.* In this, all the names are English, and much of the scene of action is laid at Sheffield—of all places ! Otherwise, it is a fairly good translation. It is curious that, with the exception of the early abridged version of *Tableaux de la Vie* which is negligible and was published without his name, this should be the only English translation of any of Restif's books until 1930, when the English *Monsieur Nicolas* appeared, and I think the *Double Life* was actually published in Paris.

The last book to be published by Restif in his lifetime

was *Les Posthumes ; Lettres reçues après la mort du Mari, par sa Femme, par feu Cazotte*, 4 volumes, 1802, with a frontispiece to each volume. It had probably been printed about six or eight years before it was published, and the delay appears to have been due to official action. The composition of it was begun as far back as 1792. Originally entitled *Lettres du Tombeau*, it consists of letters written by a husband who, away from his wife and knowing himself to be dying, leaves them behind him to be delivered to her at stated intervals and so gently break to her the knowledge of his decease. Cubières says that it was Mme. de Beauharnais who gave Restif the subject of this book, " but her idea was simple, natural, gracious ; it would hardly have filled half a volume, and Restif made four of it, and even then did not finish it." It was some of these letters that Restif read at Mme. de Beauharnais' " evenings," already described. Only the first few letters relate the affection and tenderness of the husband and wife towards each other. The rest launch forth into various stories and subjects, some of the most fantastic nature. It is a strange medley. Cubières says of it : " The idea is of a sublime bizarrerie, if I can ally those two terms, but there are also revolting obscenities," and Tabarant says : " There is nothing more extravagant in the work of Restif, and I know nothing more boring than the first three parts." On the other hand, Funck-Brentano is of opinion that in spite of stupid digressions, pitiable puerilities and unnecessary obscenities, this book " contains pages of a moving beauty and impressive grandeur, notably in the parts where the writer expresses his pantheism and his cosmogonic system." Restif himself, who also acknowledges his indebtedness to Mme. de Beauharnais for the idea of the book, says, " My aim in the composition of this extraordinary work is the same as that of Pythagoras on his arrival in Italy : to cure men of vain fears of Death." As for the ascription of the authorship to Cazotte, author of *Le Diable Amoureux*, who had been a friend of Restif

and was guillotined in 1792, this is pure invention. It bears the stamp of Restif's own hand throughout, but not at its highest level of achievement.

The last book of all, which appeared after Restif's death, was *L'Histoire des Compagnes de Maric, ou Episodes de la vie d'une jolie Femme*, 3 volumes, 1811. It is notable only for containing the first biography of Restif, by his friend Cubières-Palmézeaux, which fills the first volume. Cubières himself admits that " it is very inferior to the masterpieces of Restif, though it is not without interest." The interest is very slight indeed, and mainly relates to the fact that the " Maria " of the title was the Comtesse de Beauharnais, and even she is generally only indirectly presented. Occasionally, when she appears more directly, as in the " Distractions of Maria," which relates an amusing episode of her youth, it shows more signs of coming to life. But it is of no importance amongst the works of Restif.

In *Mes Ouvrages*, which fills the sixteenth and last volume of *Monsieur Nicolas*, and was published in 1797, Restif includes two works which were never printed. The first is *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux*, of which he says : " This work, which is in six parts and is still in manuscript, is of an absolutely new kind, not only as regards my other productions, but relatively to those of all other authors." And from his description of it, it certainly seems to be so. It relates to a theory of securing immortality for mankind, and appears to have been as fantastic as anything that Restif ever wrote. The manuscript was finished, and it is said that the beginning of it was even printed, but it was never published. Even the manuscript has disappeared, though fragments of it have been discovered in different places. The other is *Les Mille et Une Métamorphoses*, four parts, which he says is only commenced, and that he may change the plan of it, so will say nothing about it. Then there is evidence that the sixth and last of his " graphes," *Le Glossographe, ou la Langue Réformée*, which had been announced ever since 1789, was partly written, and he

gives many details of it in *Mes Ouvrages*. But both these manuscripts have likewise disappeared.

Restif's papers appear to have been scattered indiscriminately after his death, but it is probable that, with the exception of *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux*, there was no completed work, and the fragments would not be of much importance, as for practically the last ten years of his life, Restif's powers were rapidly declining, and his writing days were to all intents and purposes over.

Nevertheless, he still had plans for twenty-eight more books, as he announced in *Le Drame de la Vie* and *Mes Ouvrages*, but none of these were ever even started on.

The last of Restif to be published was *Mes Inscriptions* (1889) which is a carefully annotated edition of a notebook in which Restif copied all the inscriptions he had carved on the stone walls of the Ile Saint-Louis during many years, as we have already seen. This notebook was discovered in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, and how it got there still remains a mystery. It consists merely of single words or abbreviations, often in Latin, with dates, commemorating for himself events or actions in Restif's life. It is not therefore a book at all, in the literary sense, but as a record and means of checking statements in *Monsieur Nicolas* and other works concerning the period it covers, *Mes Inscriptions* is invaluable from the biographical point of view, and has been admirably edited by Paul Cottin. It is improbable that any further manuscripts of Restif will be discovered now, but one never knows. A few of his unpublished letters were printed in 1883.

This concludes our rapid survey of the lesser works of Restif, and I have not been able to bestow much commendation upon any of them. Several of them contain good parts, but for the most part it is a laborious job to arrive at them. If one had to select, I would place *La Femme Infidelle*, *Ingénue Saxancour* and *Le Ménage Parisien* as the best of them, in the order named. Yet most of them have interest from the biographical standpoint, and even

for a study of Restif's mentality and development. As Tabarant has said, "All that which seems trifling, all that which is dull in Restif is precisely that which informs us best about his personality and his thought." We have now the longer and more important works to consider.

II

LA VIE DE MON PÈRE, LES CONTEMPORAINES AND *LES NUITS*

DIFFERENT to all Restif's other books and holding a place entirely by itself amongst his works, is *La Vie de Mon Père*, 2 volumes, 1779. It is the life of his father, Edmé Restif, written in a romancing and highly sentimentalised way. As we have seen, Edmé Restif " was a well-to-do farmer and vineyard cultivator, living in a community which enjoyed many privileges and considerable self-government. He had once been a clerk in Paris, and he was only a peasant in the sense that he himself worked on the land with his family and his thirteen men-servants and maid-servants. His position corresponded to that of the yeoman in England at the same date. In addition to labour on the land, he exercised the functions of village notary and justice of the peace." (This is Havelock Ellis's description of him.) We know that he was a most admirable man, of high character and the utmost probity, but his son, in his filial admiration, has gone to extremes, and in gilding the lily, as it were, has presented an almost unbelievable paragon of virtue. And not only that. The chief attraction and interest of the book is the account it gives of rural life and conditions in France at that period, in which respect it is unique amongst all contemporary works. But charming and delightful as is the picture here presented, it is so highly idealised and sentimentalised that provincial France becomes a veritable Arcady, which was hardly the case in reality. Not only Edmé Restif himself but also all his family and relations, friends and neighbours and servants are excellent people—with one exception, Thomas Dondaine, who is the only and rather mild

" villain of the piece." But for him, there is not a character in the whole book that is not good, virtuous, sensible, respectable or venerable, and even the domestics are models of praiseworthiness. Very far from this paradise are such naughty boys as the brothers Courtcou. Very different is the picture from that presented in *Monsieur Nicolas* and *Le Paysan et La Paysanne Pervertis*. Obviously Restif, when writing it, was suffering from extreme nostalgia. But allowing for all this, and highly idealised as it is, we can still detect that which was undoubtedly true in it, and it gives us details and particulars of that phase of life at the time which are not to be found anywhere else. The charm of it all is undeniable, and it is certainly well written. The fields and pastures, the animals and the birds, the simple life and honest character of the people—all are there. What a contrast to *L'Anti-Justine !* The two books are at the utmost extremes, and it is difficult to realise that they could be written by the same person. I had already thought that *La Vie de Mon Père* would make an admirable Sunday-school prize, when I discovered that it actually had been published by a Religious Society in 1848, as a " Christian Novel," presumably for that kind of purpose. It is indeed that kind of book, an adult *Sandford and Merton*, with the Sandford element predominating.

The original edition contains fourteen delightful anonymous engravings, exceedingly well done, and on the title-pages two most charming medallion portraits of the author's father and mother, in the first volume Edmé Restif at the age of nineteen, and in the second Barbe Ferlet at the age of seventeen, both extremely attractive. The book was a great and immediate success, received with praise from all sides, and a second edition was called for within a few months. The literary journals said it was Restif's best work, although *Le Paysan Perverti* had appeared four years previously. A Government official is reported to have said, " I wish that the Minister would have a hundred thousand copies of these two little volumes

LE TRANSPORT DES FILLES DE JOYE A L'HOPITAL

Tiré du Cabinet de Monsieur Damery, Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal & Militaire de S^t Louis

Rejouissez-vous, belle Jeunesse !
Vos Nymphes vont se rafraichir,
Non pas avec du lait d'Anesse
Il ne suffit pour les guerir
Souvent un Pere de famille
Ne pense pas dans cet instant,
Que sa Femme, ainsi que sa Fille,
A pris bruit, en font autant.

Paris chez l'Auteur Graveur du Roi et de LL. Majestés
Imp^m a R^m rue des Mathurins vis a vis celle des Noyers

printed, for free distribution to all the heads of small towns and villages." Restif himself calls it " the most estimable " of all his books, and that which had the most general success. Of its inception, he says as follows : " When I was rid of *Le Nouvel Abeilard*, to which I had been inspired by my young beauties, I had a vivid and luminous idea, worthy of the *Paysan-Paysanne Perverti*. Remembering all that my father used to tell us in my childhood concerning his stay in Paris, and the numerous anecdotes which I had heard from his lips, I set myself to write the life of Edmé Restif. I never revised this little work, but handed it over to the printers as I finished the manuscript. It is told without art or adornment, for memory took the place of imagination. For the second and third editions I only corrected a few faults in style and inserted some incidents I had forgotten. This production had an immediate success, an amazing thing considering it contained no appeal to our young sparks, nor anything in disparagement of women or philosophy. Only honest folk would buy it, and apparently for the first time these set the fashion. It was in *La Vie de Mon Père* that I ventured to suggest that priests should marry."

Cubières says : " There are not, in *La Vie de Mon Père*, the same defects as in *Monsieur Nicolas ;* above all, there are not the energy, the profundity and the strength which dominate in *Le Paysan Perverti ;* but if Restif de la Bretonne had not written *Le Paysan Perverti*, nor *Monsieur Nicolas*, it is certain that *La Vie de Mon Père* would have been his masterpiece. In *Le Paysan Perverti*, he describes little but crimes ; in *Monsieur Nicolas* there are some details which cause modesty and even innocence to shudder. But here, all is pure, majestic, calm, tranquil, as virtue itself ; *La Vie de Mon Père* is a wholly patriarchal work, and one can say that, apart from the Holy Bible, it would have served in the olden times as a counterpart to the history of Tobias. I say more : this work is more correctly written than all the others ; I have noticed hardly ten faults of language in it ; and we know that the productions of Restif teem

with them." Funck-Brentano calls it " the masterpiece of Restif de la Bretonne, which is sufficient to assure him an eminent place in our literature ; the best of Restif's works, for both an admirable moral manner and an exceptionally polished form. Restif has here traced a picture, moving in its simplicity, of the life of peasants of average condition in the France of the Ancien Régime. This work alone would make one forgive Restif all the rest he has written in too many pages which are tedious, repugnant, occasionally disgusting. It was so simply and naturally written, that he gave it to the printer even before he had finished it." Emile Herriot considers it to be Restif's masterpiece, and the peasants in this book have been compared to those in the works of Balzac, George Sand and Zola, to the latter's disadvantage. Many other writers have praised it very highly, and it has received more encomiums than any of Restif's other books. The influence of Rousseau is perhaps more apparent here than in any of his other works. In face of all this, dare I avow that, to one reader at least, it seems a little dull, its style too oratorical and hortatory, its moral tendency too emphatic, and its irreproachable peasants a little too good to be true? However, there is no denying that it has charm, and the wonder is that it was not translated into English in the last century, to provide the ideal school prize.

We are in a very different atmosphere indeed, in the tremendous series of books called *Les Contemporaines* and its companions.

First, to explain what the series consists of, and the different titles. To begin with, there are the three series of *Les Contemporaines* proper, in 42 volumes with 283 illustrations, viz. : *Les Contemporaines, ou Avantures des plus jolies Femmes de l'Age présent*, 17 vols., 1780–82 ; *Les Contemporaines-du-Commun, ou Avantures des belles Marchandes, Ouvrières, etc.*, 13 vols., 1782–83 ; *Les Contemporaines-par-Gradation*, 12 vols., 1783. These were followed by *Les Françaises*, 4 vols., 1786, with 34 illustrations, *Les Parisi-*

ennes, 4 vols., 1787, with 20 illustrations, *Le Palais-Royal*, 3 vols., 1790, with frontispieces, *L'Année des Dames Nationales ; Histoire, jour-par-jour, d'une Femme de France*, 12 vols., 1791–94, with 32 illustrations, and finally, *Les Nouvelles Contemporaines*, 2 vols., 1802, with portrait. We may, however, dismiss the last-named, as it merely consists of incidents taken from Restif's other books, especially *Monsieur Nicolas*, with the names altered and various details changed. But without this, there remain 65 volumes, with 372 illustrations. A formidable total ! They may be dealt with all together, as they are all the same kind of thing. The original *Contemporaines* were so successful that Restif made more money out of them than probably all his other works put together, and having once struck this profitable vein, he followed it up with sequels and continuations over fourteen years.

It is a collection of stories and incidents of the most varied kind, and Restif himself computes that in the sixty-five volumes there are at least one thousand and fifty short stories. Naturally, in such a vast collection there is considerable inequality, some good, many indifferent, a few very poor. Restif took his material from here, there and everywhere ; things he saw, things he heard, incidents in his other books, ideas he had thought of for new books, letters, newspapers, history—everything, including his own imagination. Several of the stories were true and the characters therein recognisable, so that the book also became a *succès de scandale*, and Restif himself was told that there were two hundred people in Paris who had sworn to have his blood, on that account. Nevertheless, it all helped the sales of the books. Restif himself considered that *Les Parisiennes* was the best of the series. But there really is not much to choose between them ; they are all a mixture of good and bad. They are essentially books to make selections from. It was a custom of Restif at this time to write every evening when he got home, before he went to bed, notes of all he had seen or heard of any interest during the day, and it was from these notes

that a great part of these books were composed. Naturally, the incidents were often elaborated and novelised.

Le Palais-Royal was originally called *Les Filles de Palais-Royal*, but it was refused by the censors on the grounds of immorality, and only appeared after some delay and a little alteration. "We know," says Restif, "that the *Nouveau Palais-Royal* has become the universal centre for agitations, business, pleasure, licence, debauch, gambling, jobbery, sale of money, assignats and drafts, and consequently the temple or *prostibulum* of Observation." It was the prostitution aspect of it that he chiefly dealt with in this book. Bonneville said to Cubières that it was this book which justified Restif being called the French Petronius or Aretino, and that when he reproached him for dwelling so much on that particular side of it, Restif replied that he had done so to supply what Mercier, in his *Tableau de Paris*, had left out in his account of the Palais-Royal, and which was actually its most prominent feature.

L'Année des Dames Nationales, also called by Restif *Les Provinciales*, gives an account of a different woman for every day of the year. It also contains what he describes as *Nationales Hors-d'Œuvres*, which are accounts of historical women, such as Marie Antoinette, Princesse Elisabeth, Mme. Dubarry, Mme. de Genlis, and others, which are quite short, and sometimes amusing.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that in *Les Françaises* there is a section on *Les Auteurs*, where Restif discusses Voltaire, Rousseau, Buffon, Molière, Corneille, Racine and the elder Crébillon, and, incidentally, highly praises Shakespeare, whom he greatly admired, and to whom there are references elsewhere in his works, always in laudatory terms. In discussing the tragedies of the elder Crébillon, Restif writes: "Who is that man, great in expression, great in sentiments, who causes my heart to tremble, in showing remorse in action in *Macbeth?* Ah! there is real tragedy!" In another section on *Les Romans*, which Restif pretends is by somebody whom he

calls " M. Marivet-Courtenay," but is really by himself, after highly praising Richardson, Rousseau and L'Abbé Prévôt, and considering several other writers, he calmly proceeds to a long eulogy of his own books, written in all seriousness, which only makes it more amusing. The following are a sample of the gems to be culled from this article :—

" But the moralist the most marked, the most useful, who only has in view the welfare of his fellow-creatures, is the author of *Les Contemporaines*. Not only his 346 *nouvelles*, a number which exceeds that which all the others have produced together, are a sustained system of morals, but all his other works have utility as their aim." " His masterpiece is *Le Paysan et la Paysanne Pervertis*. What an admirable work ! " " After that work, the most useful and that which is to be recommended to all the world is *La Vie de Mon Père*, a work which is heavenly for its touching naïvety and its historic truthfulness." " There is nothing more useful than the lessons taught by such novels as *Pamela*, *Eloise*, *Gil Blas*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Le Paysan Perverti* and *Les Contemporaines ;* these romances are as much above the moral fables as the characters in them surpass those of Æsop, Phædrus and La Fontaine." And many others of his books published up to that time, such as *Le Nouvel Abeilard*, come in for similar praise.

The illustrations are an important part of this series of books, and the 283 in the forty-two volumes of *Les Contemporaines* make that work a veritable picture-book. Indeed, it is now generally sought for and fetches good prices entirely for the sake of the plates. By far the greater number of them are by Binet, and are beautifully engraved. They are some of the most charming small engravings of the eighteenth century, and are a real delight. As we have seen, Binet, fine artist as he was, cheerfully submitted to the dictation of Restif, who gave him the most detailed and explicit descriptions of exactly what he wanted. We thus have the tall, elongated figures, of both males and females, and in the latter, tiny

feet with dainty high-heeled shoes, incredibly slender waists and two full round globes for breasts which are more or less uncovered. All these characteristics are especially pronounced in the illustrations to *Le Paysan and La Paysanne*. Restif particularly insisted upon these details. Louis Binet eventually so assimilated the peculiar conceptions of Restif that they almost became a personal idiosyncrasy of his own, which was copied by other illustrators of Restif's books, but without his touch of genius. It may be said that his illustrations to Restif are as inseparable from the works as are those of Cruikshank and " Phiz " to the works of Dickens and Harrison Ainsworth, and no modern ones can be compared with them and only seem just " wrong." It is greatly to be regretted that Binet's illustrations to *Monsieur Nicolas* were never done, though Restif gives descriptions for them. They would have greatly added to the interest of the book.

Very similar in character and style to *Les Contemporaines* series is *Les Nuits de Paris*, 8 vols., 1788–94. Each volume contains two parts. The first fourteen parts were published in seven volumes in 1788, and the last two parts appeared separately, Part XV in 1790 and Part XVI in 1794. There are eighteen illustrations, most of which are much inferior to the earlier ones.

The sub-title of this book is *Le Spectator Nocturne*, and originally it was to have been called *L'Hibou* (The Owl). I have already quoted Restif's account of its inception, and how he intended it to include " all those actual facts of which my nightly wanderings had made me witness in the course of my life." It has, therefore, slightly more cohesion and symmetry than *Les Contemporaines*, and is on the whole a better book, though its plan is elastic enough to include all sorts of odds and ends. Still, it undoubtedly does give us a vivid series of vignettes of the night-life in the streets of Paris at that period. In his constant nocturnal rambles, frequently lasting the whole night, which I have already described, Restif had unrivalled opportunities for observation, of which he took full

advantage. Nobody else at that time ever wanted to do, or even thought of doing, such a thing, and it is greatly to Restif's credit that he both thought of it and did it. It is actually pure " journalism " in the modern sense, as really is also *Les Contemporaines*. Restif may therefore be considered as the first modern journalist, and we can imagine him being an excellent " special Reporter " for, say, the *Daily Telegraph* of a few years ago. He had that " flair " for generally happening to be on the spot, and any incident he saw lost nothing in his narration of it. In these books, he is a *journaliste manqué*. The pictures we are here given of both places and people are many and varied. Lively descriptions of the public gardens, such as the Palais-Royal, the Tuileries, the Luxembourg and the Jardin des Plantes, are followed by such scenes as the Rue Saint-Honoré at night, which is described as an " assemblage of luxury, commerce, mud, the Opera, girls, impudence, urbanity, debauchery, courtesy, swindling and all the advantages and all the abuses of city life " ; an orgy in a house in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where the Duc d'Orléans, the Comte d'Artois and other aristocratic people " gave themselves up to all the infamies since described by de Sade in his execrable book entitled *Justine* " ; the *Cafés*, the billiard saloons, the public dances, the public baths on the banks of the Seine, the hairdressers' shops, the burning of the Opera House, a midnight Mass, the brothels—together with assignations, quarrels, accidents, scraps of conversation overheard, a girl at an open window, elopements, abductions, etc.—these are but a fraction of the thousand and one things recorded or described. Naturally some of them are not suitable *pour la jeune fille*, and literally justify the term " Rousseau du ruisseau," but they certainly are what the French call *vraisemblable*. As an example of the general kind of thing, I will here give one of the shortest, chosen at hazard :—

As I returned, I was deeply lost in thought. I passed by a prison, which no longer exists—it was the Petit-Châtelet ; suddenly I stopped, my soul full of gloom ; I stood still, when I heard a slight noise. I saw an unfortunate who, with the aid of a rope, crept along a high tower which faced on to the river. My hair stood on end. " What is that ? " I said to myself. " Is it an assassin ? " I would give warning. " But is it some unlucky fellow who flees from the oppression of an unjust family or a powerful enemy ? Ah ! if he escapes from tyranny ! " I kept quiet, then, and went to the place where I knew the prisoner would have to pass. But he did not appear. I saw him swimming in the river. I still waited for him, but took precautions nevertheless. He came out of the water near the horse-watering place. " You bathe at a very cold time," I said to him. " Bathe ! I fell into the water." " Can I help you ? " " Yes : do me the favour of giving me your hat. I have lost mine." I could not refuse : I gave it him. As soon as he had got it he put it on his head and disappeared so quickly that I lost sight of him. Next day I learned that he was a celebrated thief, and I admit that I regretted my hat ; I should have done better to have warned the careless sentinel. But who could, without being obliged to by duty, take upon himself to push back into the abyss of misfortune an unhappy creature who clings to the tree of liberty ? Compassion is always praiseworthy, although it sometimes deceives.

They are by no means all such moral stories as that—but it shows Restif's kindness of heart and generous principles, which were admitted by all to be characteristic of him. In scores of incidents in *Les Nuits*, he helps and befriends all sorts of people in trouble or danger, and goes to the assistance of numberless maidens in distress, and this I believe to be perfectly true.

The fifteenth part of *Les Nuits*, called *La Semaine Nocturne*, and the sixteenth, are particularly interesting, as they deal with Restif's experiences in the streets during the Revolution, from 1789 to 1793, and with the exception of the *Politique* in the fifteenth volume of *Monsieur Nicolas*, are the only things he wrote directly concerned with that subject, upon which, he is for the most part, and especially for him, strangely reticent. He tells us that the sixteenth part of *Les Nuits* was to have described all the horrors of "the infamous Marat," but it was forbidden by the authorities, and he therefore changed his plan. Many critics have condemned Restif for being a "turncoat" during the Revolution. At first he was a staunch Royalist, and later he wrote of the faults and trickery of the King and Queen, but he never blackguarded them. It is true that he praised Marat and Robespierre when they were in power, and execrated them after their fall. But those who have blamed him had not lived under the Terror, nor yet under the Gestapo. Restif was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He valued his own skin, and there must have been many thousands like him. Tabarant also complains of the inadequacy of his treatment of the Revolutionary scenes, and it must be admitted that it is hardly what one would have expected from a writer of Restif's ability and temperament. But the subject, at close quarters, was probably too much for him, and by the time it was all over he was past his best work. What scenes we have got from him are vivid and veracious.

Taking them all round, *Les Contemporaines* and *Les Nuits de Paris* are remarkable books, containing a vast amount of material, some of which is good, much decidedly poor. But on the whole, they present a picture of the life and people of Paris at the period such as is to be found nowhere else. They are contemporary journalism at its best, and as such, full of value and interest. Collectively, they form nearly half of Restif's entire work, not the best, perhaps, but very characteristic. Their very bulk has prevented them ever again becoming as popular even as they were

at the time of their publication, and admittedly there is much chaff to be winnowed away before arriving at the grain. But given time and inclination, the labour is worth while. Only, the twentieth century has no time and little inclination for that sort of thing.

III

LE PAYSAN, LA PAYSANNE AND *MONSIEUR NICOLAS*

THERE now remain to be considered Restif's chief works, and those by which he is best known and upon which his literary reputation mainly rests—namely, his most celebrated novel and his autobiography. I say " novel," because *Le Paysan* and *La Paysanne*, though first published separately, are really one book, and were afterwards amalgamated into one by the author. He himself says that the one is the complement of the other.

Le Paysan Perverti, ou les Dangers de la Ville, was first published in four volumes, without illustrations, in 1775. The title, but little else, was suggested by the *Paysan Parvenu* of Marivaux (1735).

La Paysanne Perverti, 4 volumes, with 38 illustrations, appeared in 1784. In the following year *Les Figures du Paysan Perverti* contained 82 illustrations to that work, with explanations.

Though likewise dated 1784, *Le Paysan et La Paysanne Pervertis* did not actually appear till 1787, in four volumes, with the 120 illustrations. In this work, Restif shortened and combined the two previous books, re-arranging much of the contents and making one connected story. It is in this final form that it is now generally referred to, and will, for the most part, be dealt with here. The illustrations are some of the most charming that Binet ever did, and are equal to those in *Les Contemporaines*.

In a sense, *Le Paysan* and *Monsieur Nicolas* are also complementary to one another, and may be compared and dealt with together as regards certain aspects. The one is fiction with a good deal of fact, the other fact with a slight amount of fiction, and both deal with the same subject from those different standpoints. For the basis of

Le Paysan is Restif's own life, only the story of his sister is introduced as well, many details and particulars altered, and the whole made more sensational, even melodramatic, especially in the later part. It is written, like so many of Restif's books, in the then fashionable form of letters, which incidentally, made it much easier to turn the two original books into one, by omitting some letters, combining others, and altering the arrangement of them, interspersing letters from the one book into their appropriate place in the other.

The hero is a young peasant, Edmond R . . . (or Rameau) who, to a great extent, may be regarded as Restif himself. (His name was Nicolas Edmé Restif, remember.) The letters are supposed to be edited by Pierre R . . . , Edmond's brother. Restif had a brother named Pierre. Edmond's sister, Ursule, is founded on Restif's sister, Geneviève. M. and Mme. Parangon appear, as well as many other names familiar in Restif's own life, such as Gaudet d'Arras, Loiseau, Manon, Tiennette, and several more. But he himself tells us that most of the characters in the novel are composite portraits, combining the traits of, and facts about, at least two, or sometimes three, different originals in one. And this is obvious when we compare the characters in *Le Paysan* with their prototypes in *Monsieur Nicolas*. The interweaving of fact with fiction is especially evident in the earlier part. Later, fiction almost entirely predominates.

The book opens with the arrival of the youthful Edmond at the town of A . . . (Auxerre), whence he has come from the village of S . . . (Sacy) to be the pupil of a painter (instead of printer), M. Parangon. The circumstances of his going there, and much of his life there after his arrival, are exactly as really was the case with Restif himself. His passion for, and assault on, Mme. Parangon are related, much as in *Monsieur Nicolas*. Manon, the cousin of Mme. Parangon, who is acting as mistress of the house in the latter's absence, receives him with the

haughtiness and contempt which wounds his self-esteem, and pride, as was actually true. This causes Edmond to determine to gain at least her respect, if not her affection, which plays into the hands of the scheming and lecherous M. Parangon, whose mistress she is, and who persuades her into trapping his young pupil into marriage, to suit his own ends. This is accomplished, though Edmond has already discovered that Manon is about to become the mother of M. Parangon's child. His first impulse is to upbraid her for her duplicity, and spurn the idea of marrying her. But he has meanwhile become friendly with Gaudet d'Arras, the Franciscan, who has already begun his insidious course of training of the youth in libertinism. He persuades Edmond to marry Manon, mainly because the latter's mother has agreed to transfer the family fortune to her son-in-law. The girl becomes deeply in love with her young husband, but Gaudet contrives that she shall discover a cynical letter written to him by Edmond, with the result that Manon, on realising that she has been used as a mere convenience for her husband's material advancement, commits suicide.

I quote this as an example of the mixture of fact and fiction referred to. The action here of M. Parangon is precisely that which Restif declares really happened with regard to Agnès Lebègue, his actual wife.

I do not propose to describe here the very long, involved and complicated story of the *Paysan-Paysanne*, nor point out the facts intermingled with the fiction. I will therefore but briefly state the leading incidents of the book.

Edmond's sister, Ursule, comes to Auxerre as the ward of Mme. Parangon, and Gaudet insinuates that the latter's affection for the young girl is not wholly a pure one. (A curious slur, this, upon the character of Restif's " divinity," and for which, so far as can be traced, there is not the slightest foundation. But perhaps it was intended to reflect upon the evil nature of the monk's mind, rather than on the character of the lady.) Gaudet

submits Ursule to the same course of education in libertinism as her brother, and finds her an apt pupil. Incidentally, he has dissuaded Edmond from a projected marriage with an innocent vine-grower's daughter, and instigated the youth's rape of Mme. Parangon. By Gaudet's contrivance, Ursule is violated by a nobleman who is infatuated with her beauty, and who is then discreetly blackmailed by Gaudet, for the advantage of a young cousin of Edmond who, in accordance with the monk's precepts, the boy has seduced and is responsible for the child. Ursule is now in Paris, and has become one of the most expensive *cocottes* there. She falls victim to the vindictiveness of one of her dupes, an old Italian banker, and is abducted, forcibly married to a street-porter, and subjected to every conceivable form of brutality. Edmond goes to Paris to search for her, and finds her in a brothel. From the advent of Ursule at Auxerre, fiction has prevailed over fact, and henceforth the latter is almost non-existent. The book becomes more and more melodramatic. Edmond becomes enamoured with the wife of his sister's seducer, and has an affair with her. He even becomes the pander of his sister, and finally, unwittingly commits incest with her. Gaudet, now no longer a monk, comes to the rescue, and wreaks a typical revenge on the Italian by abducting his daughter and reducing her to the situation of Ursule. The latter, now gravely ill, spends some time in hospital, and eventually returns in penitence to her home in Burgundy. Gaudet and Edmond embark upon a grandiose scheme for the reform of social abuses (typical Restif, this), but they must first have wealth. They therefore marry two rich elderly women, and thanks to their combined wealth, both obtain important administrative posts, and by secretly playing into each other's hands, acquire immense power and add to their riches. Gaudet's wife dies and he is arrested on a charge of having poisoned her, and Edmond is arrested too, as an accomplice. They attack their guards, and as a result Edmond is condemned

to the galleys. Gaudet, rather than face execution, kills himself. Edmond is eventually pardoned, and after years of wandering, returns to his native village. Here, ignorant that his sister is now married to her seducer, who had become a widower, he kills her in order to save her soul. He himself is crushed under the wheels of his own carriage and, by a queer trick of fate, the stone that caused his horses to bolt was thrown by a girl whom he had ruined.

Thus this sensational story ends on a moral note, all the people who had become corrupted and perverted meeting with a violent end. Restif always declared his moral purpose in writing all his books, and persuaded himself that however scabrous some of the details may be, the endings of his books and the lessons to be learned from them were always highly salutary.

The above outline of the story has been taken mainly from the account given by Professor F. C. Green in the admirable chapter on Restif in his delightful book *Minuet*, which is the only study of the *Paysan-Paysanne* in English that I am aware of, and whose epitome of the plot is much better than I could have done myself. I have shortened it considerably and so summary a description of the story of this remarkable book as the above may give the reader but a very faint idea of it, and that, perhaps, not entirely a fair one. But it indicates the quiet and placid beginning of it, leading up to the highly melodramatic ending, and the variety of incident in between.

As a novel, this book is undoubtedly Restif's high-water mark, and is a very remarkable production for its period. The incidents are well related and the characters well presented. But the outstanding achievement of the book is the character of Gaudet d'Arras. Up to this time and for many years afterwards, there is no character in European fiction to be compared with him. Restif himself never approached this power of creation in any of his other works. The real Gaudet of *Monsieur Nicolas* is but a shadow of the Gaudet of the novel. Here, for the

first and only time, the artist in Restif achieved triumphant success. As a portent of evil and a corruptor of youth, Gaudet but carries out his own convictions. He is the central and dominating figure of the book, influencing the actions and frequently the thoughts of nearly all the other characters. Professor Green speaks of him as " this satanic and impressive figure," and the terms are fully justified. His character is more developed in *La Paysanne* than in *Le Paysan*, and it is clear that Restif had considerably elaborated it in his own mind in the interval between the two books. I must again quote Professor Green, for an interesting comparison, and part of a study of this character which, to my mind, could not be bettered.

" Gaudet, after an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide, is brought to trial. In court, he protests that Edmond is innocent and assumes all the responsibilities for the murder of the jailers. The corpse of his wife is examined, but the doctors are puzzled to find no trace of poison. Interrogated anew, Gaudet, now weakened by loss of blood, vouchsafes only the sardonic remark : ' They know their business, do they not ? ' With stubborn contempt of his judges, he adheres to his original statement. Edmond is brought to the dock and rushes into the arms of his friend, only to be roughly dragged off by his warders. For a moment Gaudet loses his iron self-control. ' Are you men or tigers ? Monsters ! You prevent two doomed and unhappy men from embracing each other. Away with you ! You are unfit for me to talk to, and from this moment my lips are sealed ! ' Where had Restif heard words like these if not in *Othello*, when Iago, in a mood of similar demoniac pride, exclaims :

> " Demand me nothing. What you know, you know :
> From this time forth I never will speak word."

There is a reminiscence of Shakespeare, too, in the account of Gaudet's supreme moments. His last speech to the despairing Edmond is fraught with dignity and resignation : " ' Take heart. . . . To you I have always

spoken the truth. At this instant I am disinterested. My friendship for you was always sincere ; its sole motive was an absolute devotion. In that I found my pleasure. I looked on you as my son and my handiwork. Whatever physical enjoyment I experienced was more through you than through myself ; that is the truth. Your greatest misfortune is in losing me, but remember that you have never abased yourself. Men may readily declare that such and such a one is dishonoured ; but they cannot dishonour him. Come, Edmond ! Death is nothing. That I realise more than ever at this supreme moment.' As he concluded these words the priest made a sign. Gaudet smiled, and, as at the moment one of his hands was free, he stretched it out, seized a large nail which by chance had remained stuck at the foot of the scaffold on which they were about to behead him, and suddenly shouted to the priest : ' Look, my friend ! Here is the fruit I've culled from your sermon. They shall not kill me and my destiny will be complete.' At the same moment he stabbed himself in the breast, over the heart. He expired at once. Nevertheless, as he was still palpitating, they cut off his head." There is an Elizabethan quality in Gaudet's elemental gesture. Like an arrow from the unseen, it plants itself quivering in our consciousness. In this brutal transition from philosophic musing to swift grim action, I wonder if there is not an echo of that supreme moment when Othello plunges the sword into his own heart. Be that as it may, it is certain that, in conceiving Gaudet, Restif strikes a chord never before sounded in a French writer. For the first time, undismayed by the spectre of *la Raison*, a French writer surrenders himself absolutely to his imagination and presents, in bold and flaring colours, the lineaments of a man whose moral code is unique and individual. Gaudet is more than a character of fiction ; he incarnates an extreme mood of French civilisation, combining, as he does, the dual forces of eighteenth-century rationalism and sensibility.

I may here, perhaps, venture to point out that in three other places in his excellent account of Restif, Professor Green confuses Gaudet d'Arras with the other Gaudet de Varzy, who arrived in Paris soon after Restif.

The relationship between Gaudet d'Arras and Edmond is, to say the least, somewhat equivocal, and closely akin to that between Vautrin and Lucien de Rubempré as described by Balzac. Indeed, Vautrin has many points of affinity with Gaudet d'Arras. To delineate a character which can be compared to the creations of Shakespeare and Balzac is surely a considerable achievement, for which Restif should be given due credit. He realised himself that he had produced something out of the ordinary, as is evident from an interesting note on the character of Gaudet in *Mes Ouvrages*, which he concludes by stating briefly : " I knew this man." In the same work is a shrewd discussion of the differences between *Le Paysan* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, to which it had been compared.

Restif himself has told us of *Le Paysan :* " I had begun the manuscript in 1769 after reading a detached part of *Pamela* which I had found by chance at Edme the bookseller's in the collège de Presle : it was this reading which gave me first the idea of writing rustic letters in which a peasant is supposed to relate everything that happens in the town. I wrote these first letters with an infinite pleasure, because in speaking of my hero, I related the adventures of my youth, at my arrival at Auxerre in 1751 and during the course of my apprenticeship." This statement has generally caused the influence of Richardson upon Restif, and this particular book, to be considerably overrated. It appears to me obvious that the suggestion of " writing rustic letters " was the beginning and the end of Richardson's influence on *Le Paysan.* This influence may be more clearly discerned in some of Restif's other books, but even there it is not very evident. " The point, however, to be remembered," says Professor Green, " is that Restif, the novelist, had no recourse to

the imagination of Richardson. In reality, he had lived through experiences the bare recital of which would have made the author of *Clarissa* shudder with pious horror." In fact, the influence of Rousseau and of the Abbé Prévost is at least as discoverable as that of the English novelist. Restif, speaking again of his reading a part of *Pamela*, says, when he was later lent the complete book while he was ill : " I confess that the book had strengthened my intention of writing *Le Paysan Perverti*, as the style seemed just what was wanted for certain of the letters. (That seems to me to be the extent of the indebtedness.) I had longed intensely ever since to finish it, and devoured all the eight volumes, and my sufferings were forgotten in the interest of it. I found *Clarissa* wearisome ; I admired the book but I did not like it. *Sir Charles Grandison* was emotionally more satisfactory, especially the first volume ; but I was too much interested in Clementina and I think it was a mistake on the part of the English author to give Miss Byron such a rival." That he admired Richardson is evident from the following remark concerning the *Paysan-Paysanne :* " It can be regarded as a work absolutely complete, and worthy of being compared, either with *Héloise*, or with the novels of Richardson. It is a vast production, like the *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *Grandison* of the latter ; it is a book full of matter and of warmth, like *Héloise*." Besides the vivid descriptions of life in the town, it also presents many charming little pictures of the country as remembered by the peasant lad away from the scenes of his childhood, rather in the manner of Rousseau. The accounts of Paris and the life there, which Edmond writes soon after his arrival in the capital, to his brother Pierre, are delightful, and undoubtedly give us Restif's own impressions under similar circumstances, and record many of the things he actually saw. The streets, the buildings, the people, the public gardens, the theatres and other entertainments, some of the plays, and in fact everything that would strike a newcomer from the country—all are there—" everything here is a spectacle : at every

step one meets with masterpieces, in pictures, in statues, in architecture." Another observation—" when I at first came to Paris, I did not know how to distinguish manners from finery : I thought all the women were respectable ; after a very little experience I went to the other extreme and took them all for whores. It requires long practice to distinguish them with certainty." He speaks with strong disapproval of the fashions of the period in dress, which often made it difficult to distinguish one sex from the other. This is a subject to which Restif frequently refers in his other works. He would have poured forth diatribes against the women's " slacks " of to-day. " In truth, Brother, I am no longer surprised at the indolence of the savages of America, of those who inhabit a cold country, such as the Canadians ; who can work up any spirit of emulation in the depths of forests ? The arts, to flourish, need luxury, pleasures, all that which a severe morality condemns, and it is for that reason that Paris has become the centre, since there are there riches and great passions. One vegetates in the provinces ; one lives only in Paris." How many young people have thought the same since !

Edmond gives much detail of the Opéra, Opéra-Comique, Théâtre-Français, and the Italiens, and the shows he saw there, which is interesting as being essentially true. He seems to have most enjoyed the Théâtre-Français and the plays there given. He says that " all the other shows are nothing in comparison " to them. The Opéra, he says " is the opposite of the Comédie-Française : there, there is nothing natural, nothing real ; it is the abode of Fairies and the country of illusion." One feels that he would have appreciated the plays of Brieux and of Bernard Shaw ; those of J. M. Barrie would have left him cold.

There are also several letters dealing with books and literary matters, from Edmond and Gaudet to each other. After having tried the stage and played a small part in a comedy, Edmond gives it up and writes to Gaudet that

he has now turned author. Characteristically, Restif here mentions two of his own works : *Le Code de Cythère*, which is the last part of *Le Pornographe*, and which he says has " a bright style, vast erudition and interesting material " ; and *Prince O-Ribo*, which " appears to me exquisite ; it contains imagination and most extraordinary incidents." Gaudet replies with a long letter on the miseries and disadvantages of an author's life, and strongly dissuades him from adopting such a profession. Amongst the authors he names who were not appreciated in their lifetime are Bacon, " who was not listened to by his century," and Milton, " who received only twenty crowns for his poem." He goes on to discuss many contemporary French writers, and even brings in the *Mimographe*, without, however, actually naming the author.

It will thus be seen that there are many points of interest in the *Paysan-Paysanne* besides the mere story, and much more could be said regarding these than has been briefly indicated here. *Le Paysan Perverti* sold rapidly on its first appearance, and met with considerable success, though the admiration it aroused was often mixed with horror and repulsion. Further editions were soon called for, and he complains that some pirated editions also appeared, and that he himself received but little money for it. But it established his literary reputation, and was the book that he was best known by, and is generally regarded as his best work. Its only rival in this latter respect, amongst Restif's other works, is his amazing autobiography, which many, including the present writer, consider to be a better book, and unquestionably his masterpiece.

Monsieur Nicolas, ou le Cœur Humain Dévoilé was published in sixteen volumes during 1796 and 1797. The first four parts were printed in and dated 1794, but did not appear till 1796, when most of the rest were also published, except the last three volumes, which appeared in 1797. The autobiography itself fills the first twelve volumes. The remaining four contain *Mon Calendrier*, *Ma Morale et Ma*

Religion in one, *Ma Politique* and *Mes Ouvrages*, respectively. There were no illustrations, though "avec figures" appeared on the title-page. Restif, as was his custom, gives, in the book, descriptions of the 150 plates —of which 64 were to be portraits—which he intended for it, and the details of these were discussed and determined by Binet the artist, Berthet the engraver, and himself, Binet even having benevolently designed several compositions for the earlier parts. But it will be remembered that at the time Restif was ruined and in great poverty, and indeed only decided to publish the book at all in the hope of thereby raising some money, as he had originally intended that it should not be published till after his death, or at least for a few more years. He therefore could not afford the expense of the illustrations, though he hoped that by means of many new subscribers he would soon be able to do so, and it was even contemplated that a separate publication should appear, containing the *Figures de Monsieur Nicolas*, similar to the *Figures du Paysan et de la Paysanne Pervertis*. But even this was not to be. The book created no sensation at the time of its publication, and the sale of it was not rapid. Restif's hopes were disappointed, and we were deprived of what would undoubtedly have been an additional delight to the book itself, which is our misfortune. But the prices paid to artists and the costs of production had nearly tripled since the plates for the *Paysan-Paysanne* and the *Contemporaines* were done under post-Revolution conditions and it was estimated that the projected illustrations would cost at least 34,500 livres. Therefore, Restif and ourselves were doomed to disappointment in this respect, and the illustrations never appeared, for which reason, the original edition, though extremely scarce, is not so much sought after.

Restif had first conceived the idea of writing an autobiography in his youth, long before he took to authorship as a profession, but this early effort did not make much progress, and he destroyed it himself. The first inception

of the book that was to be dates back as far as 1777, when it bore the title of *Ressorts du Cœur Humain Dévoilés*, and he actually gives that date to the " Dedication to Myself " of *Monsieur Nicolas*. But there is a passage in that dedication which either disproves that date, or was added later : " I shall disguise nothing ; I shall dissect the ordinary man as J. J. Rousseau dissected the great man, but in no servile imitation of him. He did not give me the idea for this book ; self gave it to myself." Rousseau's *Confessions* were not published till 1782, and in a note to the Introduction to his book Restif adds : " I declare (and no one would doubt it) that I had begun *Monsieur Nicolas* long before I had seen the *Confessions* of J. J. Rousseau, for it has been announced in my printed Catalogues since 1778. Nor shall I be suspected of having tried to imitate Mme. de Warens in Mme. Parangon (who is in every way different !) when it is remembered that my heroine is also the heroine of the *Paysan Perverti*, published before J. J.'s project was heard of." Anxious as he was to disclaim any debt for the idea to Rousseau (which is true), it seems pretty certain that Restif was stimulated by the success of Rousseau's work, to begin the actual composition of his own book in the year following the former's appearance. The *Confessions* may be a greater book than *Monsieur Nicolas*, but I, for one, find the latter the more interesting to read—more vivid, more varied, more full of vitality. " There are two examples of my enterprise," says Restif " the *Confessions* of the Bishop of Hippo and those of the citizen of Geneva. I have much in common with Augustine, less with J. J. Rousseau ; and I shall imitate neither the one nor the other. I have proof that J. J. Rousseau constructed a romance, and Augustine's *Confessions* are really no more than an apologue. But for my project, exactitude and sincerity are absolutely necessary, for I propose to dissect the human heart according to my own consciousness and plumb the uttermost depths of myself. I am not writing my *confessions ;* I am *unveiling the springs of the Human Heart.*" And on the

whole he carried out his avowed purpose pretty well. " The second title of *Monsieur Nicolas*," says Saintsbury, " ambitious as it is, is not fatuous. It is a human heart in a singularly morbid condition which is unveiled ; but there is no charlatanry about the unveiling, and no bungling about the autopsy." Restif's own description of his book is as good as any. " I wanted to write a true book, entirely true from beginning to end ; to depict the events of a natural life, and to bequeath it to posterity as a treatise on moral anatomy. I am sure that I am offering an interesting and faithful reflection ; faithful by the truth of its pictures, and interesting by the variety and multiplicity of the adventures which filled my life ; by my boldness in naming everything, in compromising other people, in sacrificing them to public utility. I possessed lively passions, but none of the passions that brutalise ; such as gluttony, drunkenness, or indolence. I have always displayed the greatest activity in love. It was the need of love and sexual enjoyment which led me to desire, to seek, and to encounter that crowd of adventures which, in one single man, cause you astonishment. Well ! I have omitted an infinity of unimportant chance amours." One of the chief merits of this book is its undoubted sincerity. Base actions, though he often tries to excuse them, at least are not hidden. Indeed, the frankness of the book sometimes amounts to a form of exhibitionism, but coarseness alternates with delicacy and charm.

Monsieur Nicolas is the detailed story of Restif's life, from his birth in 1734 up to 1797, when he was sixty-two years of age. Naturally, I have used it as the basis of his biography, and have quoted from it extensively in the first part of this study ; contrary to the opinion of the author, it is the first part that is the best. The charming yet realistic pictures here presented of the life of ordinary country people at this period are unequalled in French eighteenth-century literature, and the life in a small provincial town is just as well done. Country life and people are not idealised here, as they are in *La Vie de*

Mon Père, and are therefore more real and convincing. When we get to Paris, what may be termed the " environment " interest of course completely changes. The life of the streets of the capital is vividly and variously shown, but this has been done at least equally well in *Les Nuits de Paris* and others of his books. The best part of *Monsieur Nicolas* is that relating up to 1785. After that date, there is a very decided falling off. The part relating to the last ten years of the book is nothing like so detailed nor consecutive. Chronology is no longer followed, dates jump backwards and forwards, and the author appears to have jotted down the various incidents and events as he thought of them, and in much shorter form. This may be partly explained by the fact that Restif, in his hurry to get the book out for pecuniary reasons, composed much of the later part straight on to the printing press, with no manuscript at all. He seems to have been aware of this decline himself, for he lifts the whole episode of Sara out of its proper place, and puts it as a connected story at the end, to finish the book. He says himself: " I expressly reserved the story of Sara to the end in order to leave my reader upon a more detailed, more complete and more illuminating episode. I did not want to stop upon the picture of an old man in process of destruction ; despite Nature, I want to end with an ardent passion." And this is perhaps the most celebrated, and I think also the best, of the several famous episodes of *Monsieur Nicolas*. As we have seen, Restif related his *liaison* with Sara in at least two other forms—in *Le Drame de la Vie* and in a whole book, *La Dernière Avanture d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq ans*, but of these three versions that in *Monsieur Nicolas* is the best. Many good critics have declared it to be superior to *Manon Lescaut*, and I have already compared it to the work of Proust, of which, so it seems to me, it is a definite prototype, and there is nothing else quite like it in between. Its minute analysis, its careful detail, its frequent and rapid changes of mood, all are in the Proust manner, and it undeniably bears the stamp of truth.

The same cannot be said of another of the " episodes "—that of Zéphire, which has also been highly praised by some critics, who declare that they have shed tears over it. Certainly, the pathos is turned on almost in the " Little Nell " manner, but to me it strikes an entirely artificial note. The foundation of the story may be true, but it is worked up into a misplaced exhibition of sickly sentimentality. Another of the " episodes " is better—that of Louise and Thérèse, which is as celebrated as that of Sara, but, to my mind, less good. It has been called " an incomparable masterpiece," and Funck-Brentano reckons its pages among the best in French literature, while Bloch is almost equally enthusiastic. But here again, in *Monsieur Nicolas*, it is obviously written up and is over-full of sentimentality. The earlier version of it in *Les Nuits* is really preferable, and is no doubt more true to the actual facts.

And this brings us to another point : How far can *Monsieur Nicolas* be regarded as a veracious and exact relation of the truth ? I think the answer is : To a very great extent. The main narrative and the vast majority of the incidents and events are undoubtedly true. It is only a few minor facts, and more especially the famous " episodes " just referred to—with the exception of the Sara one—that have been altered or written up, where Restif has allowed his talent as a story-teller momentarily to overcome his integrity as a veracious chronicler. On the whole, I should rate his truthfulness as superior to that of Casanova, for instance—though the latter's veracity has generally been greatly underestimated, and many of his most unlikely incidents and those which have been regarded with the greatest unbelief, have in later years been proved to be true. Restif is also undoubtedly more truthful than Rousseau. For one thing, Rousseau wrote his *Confessions* entirely from memory, whereas Restif had the advantage of his invaluable Notebooks to refresh his already excellent memory. He had kept these ever since 1749, and although those covering a certain

period were destroyed in 1752 by his redoubtable mother-in-law, Mme. Lebègue, in a fit of rage, which fact he never ceased to deplore, the loss was not considerable and was to some extent made good. So when he came to write *Monsieur Nicolas*, he already possessed a solid foundation on which to base it. Certainly, a few of Restif's personal idiosyncrasies—more especially his incest complex—are carried to excess in his autobiography. The way that practically every woman and girl with whom he had intimacy invariably afterwards gave birth to a daughter, and how later, in Paris, a vast number of the girls he met turned out to be his natural daughters, simply becomes ludicrous. Whenever we read of Restif first meeting a young girl, towards whom he feels his heart irresistibly attracted and a strong bond of sympathy mysteriously and suddenly springing up between them, we immediately know that she will inevitably turn out to be his own daughter by one of his former and long-lost-sight-of mistresses. In this way, in his own imagination, he fathered half the inmates of the brothels of Paris. But this is only one of his little foibles, and need not be taken seriously, as neither need his assertion that at the age of twenty-one he was the father of twenty natural children.

In reading certain statements and incidents in *Monsieur Nicolas*, we should remember what Restif himself wrote in a letter of November 30th, 1779, quoted by Funck-Brentano from the original in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal : " I have done as engravers do when drawing an unfinished building. I have put down things as I should have liked them to happen." He certainly did this in the accounts of many of his love-affairs, and in the " episodes " above mentioned—with the exception of that of Sara. But these instances do not really detract from the general truthfulness and sincerity of the whole book. As for such statements that the *Paysan* ran to forty-two editions in a translation in England, and that the Emperor Joseph II put into force the rules and regulations for brothels, in Vienna, and carried out the ideas

suggested by Restif in the *Pornographe*, it is more than probable that Restif himself genuinely believed these things. He was inordinately vain of his literary work, and of his seriousness and usefulness as a social reformer, and it therefore gratified his self-esteem to believe such things. Where his vanity was tickled, he always became childishly credulous. But to say, as some have done, on account of these minor weaknesses, that *Monsieur Nicolas* is inaccurate and a tissue of falsehoods, is manifestly unfair and untrue. " His idea of truthful writing was to strike off pages of emotion and sentiment and dramatic intensity," says one critic. It is true that Restif often liked to " romanticise " a situation or an incident, but the *basis* is always true, and with study of and intimate familiarity with his writing, it is generally comparatively easy to distinguish fiction from fact, and to recognise where the novelist temporarily overcomes the autobiographer, and his imagination takes wing.

Restif's descriptions of localities in *Monsieur Nicolas* are absolutely faithful. As an example, the house of M. Parangon (really Fournier) at Auxerre, where Restif was apprenticed and where he lived, was still standing near the Tour de l'Horloge, in 1939, and there could be seen the shop, the living-room, the courtyard and the staircase by which the young apprentice ascended to his bedroom above the latrines—all were there, exactly as he has described them. And an inhabitant of the town has declared that with the earlier volumes of *Monsieur Nicolas* in his hands, he could closely follow the movements and the scenes of the various adventures of Restif in Auxerre. This charming old town did not, so far as I could discover when I was there, appear to be at all aware of, or interested in, its erstwhile inhabitant who was born in the district near by, and there is no memorial of any kind to him there. But to me, at least, it still seemed to be redolent of his youthful personality.

A rather endearing trait is how he occasionally breaks off from his narrative to give expression to a thought of

the moment, or a reference to his immediate surroundings. For instance, on one occasion he suddenly interrupts himself to exclaim : " God ! how hot it is ! And to think that while I work like a hireling, half Paris is enjoying itself in the country ! " And again, in another place, he stops writing to go to the théâtre des Italiens. " They had billed a new play. Good Heavens, what an uproar ! A crowd of scatter-brains, flocked together to misbehave themselves, humming, brawling, whistling, and then demanding what the actors had said ! " And then he goes on with his story. Nothing formal, nothing " literary " here. As Restif said, Rousseau was always " a man-of-letters " ; he himself was only " a man."

The contents of the last four volumes, which are a kind of supplement to the autobiography, are of a different character. Liseux, in his excellent reprint of *Monsieur Nicolas* (1883) only included the first and last of these. It is much to be regretted that he did not also include *Ma Politique*, as it is only in this and in a part of *Les Nuits* that we get Restif's account of the Revolution. *Mon Calendrier* is a list of his mistresses, arranged like a religious calendar of saints, a day dedicated to each, with a short biography or notice, the year of their amours being given in the margin. As there were more than 365 of them, some of the days are divided between two ladies. And what an assortment of ladies ! Noble dames, citizens' wives, country-girls, shop-girls, prostitutes, all sorts—all rub shoulders together. It forms a sort of " index " to *Monsieur Nicolas*, and sometimes gives additional details.

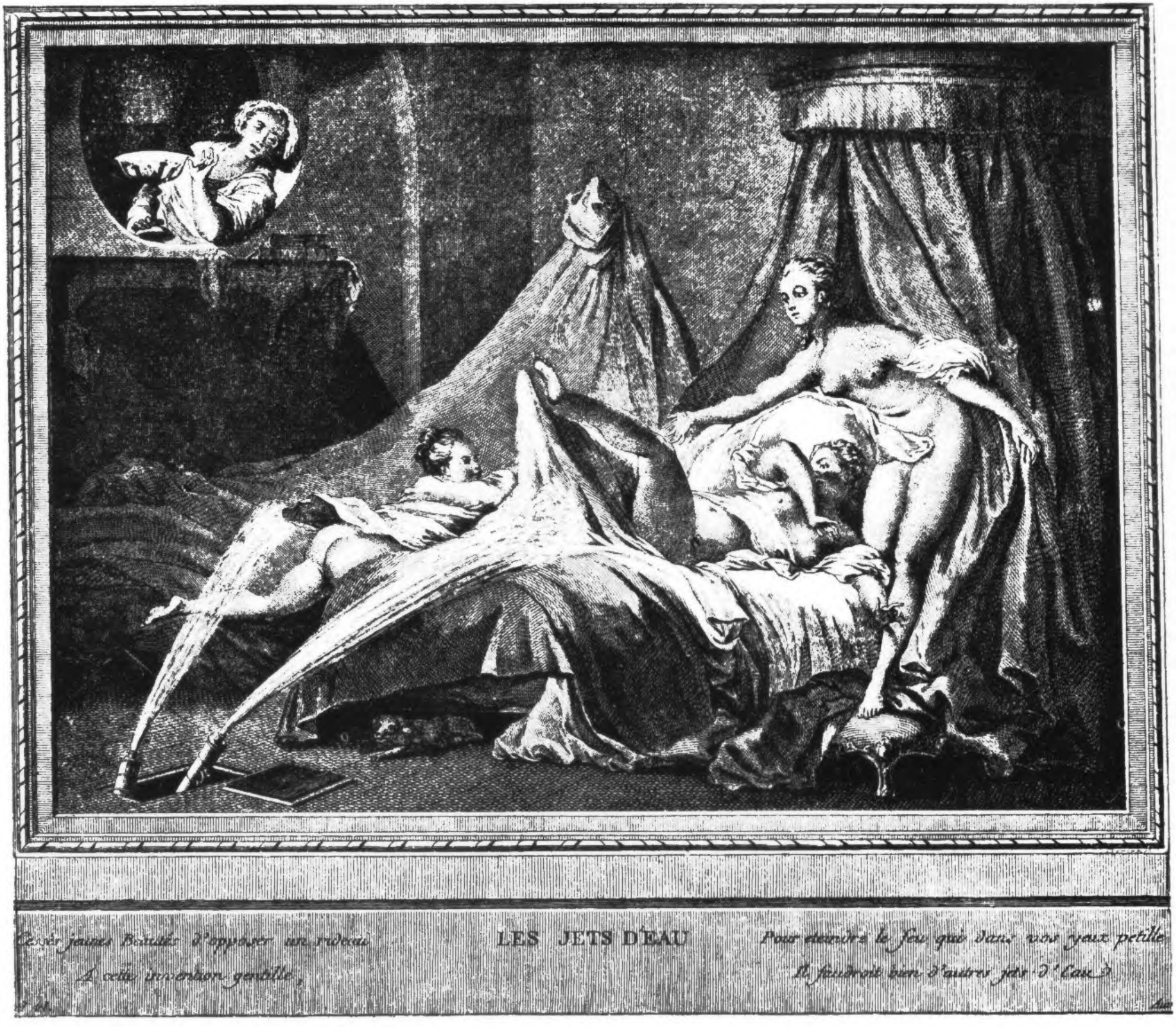
Mes Ouvrages gives an account of all Restif's published works, and at the end, two or three which he intended to publish. It sometimes affords some interesting information and particulars about his books. He announced still further supplements, such as *Mes Affairs*, *Mes Maladies*, *Ma Physique*, *Mes Contemporains*, and so forth, but these were never written. It should perhaps be mentioned that the pagination of the whole sixteen volumes is continuous throughout, and attains to a total of 4,840 pages.

In my opinion, *Monsieur Nicolas* is undoubtedly Restif's masterpiece and his most interesting book, and is also one of the great autobiographies of the world. Havelock Ellis has well expressed what I feel. " *Monsieur Nicolas*, written after long preparation, when Restif was at the highest point of his matured powers, is by all critics accepted as his chief claim to permanent remembrance. It represents him fully on every side, good and bad. . . . Notwithstanding all the defects, even glaring defects, which may be found in *Monsieur Nicolas*, whether as a work of literary art or as a trustworthy document, its right to stand among the great autobiographies, even although not in the first rank, may well be maintained. We really do here possess, as Restif himself asserted, a wonderful piece of ' natural history.' *Monsieur Nicolas* really is the veracious story, told in the most vivid and spontaneous and sometimes brilliant fashion, of an extraordinary man —however far from being admirable—in his intimate reactions with the world in which he lived. It is veracious in a sense deeper than literal truthfulness because it truly brings before us the whole man uncompromisingly, even in his credulity and his vanity and his spitefulness, as well as in his sudden impulses of generosity or humility ; it is true to Nature even when it is not true to fact. The other writings of Restif de la Bretonne may be forgotten. *Monsieur Nicolas* will remain, the fascinating picture of the ordinary life of a remarkable age, and, against that background, the living picture of an extraordinary man." Professor Green describes this book as " possibly the most amazing and most intimate autobiography ever printed," and it is Saintsbury who says, after stating that Restif has been compared not unfairly to Defoe and Rousseau, that he may also, in a certain way, be likened to Pepys. Other critics have spoken of Casanova and Cellini in this connection, and I think we may safely take it that if *Monsieur Nicolas* is far from being a perfect autobiography, a book which evokes such comparisons as those mentioned is no negligible quantity. French critics as a whole, it is

true, seem to prefer either the *Paysan-Paysanne* or the *Vie de Mon Père*, but as a " living document " they are neither of them to be compared to *Monsieur Nicolas*. They lack its vitality, veracity, vivacity, vividness and variety, as well as its force and power. It may almost be described as the epitome of the country and middle-class everyday life of eighteenth-century France, and as such is unique in French literature.

PART III

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS



112. Galanter französischer Kupferstich nach einem Gemälde von Fragonard

I

LITERARY CONSPECTUS

RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE is definitely a writer of the second class. But he is not lower than that. As we have seen, he has been underrated, and he has also been over-praised. Probably at no time has his literary reputation stood higher than it does now. His manifold faults are admitted, but his merits are recognised. From no French writer of the eighteenth century do we get such vivid pictures of the everyday life of the ordinary people, in country, provincial town and capital, as we do from him.

Ultimately, his literary reputation must rest upon two books, *Monsieur Nicolas* and *Le Paysan et La Paysanne Pervertis*. The one was written at the acme of his literary powers and development, after which he produced nothing of importance. The other, twenty years earlier, was where he freed himself from mere imitation, and first found a style and manner of his own. One may often regret the coarseness as well as the emotional sentimentality of these books, but that they have great vigour and sincerity is undeniable. He had a talent for creating " atmosphere " and his scenes and many of his characters are undoubtedly " alive." But it is true, as Professor Green says, that he lacked the " little more " that might have made him a Balzac. His " realism " was remarkable and something new in his period, and it was mainly on account of that quality that he was generally considered by his contemporaries as a " vulgar " writer.

A surprisingly shrewd contemporary criticism of Restif's works is given by the Comte de Tilly in his Memoirs. I have already quoted Tilly's account of his meeting with Restif. He continued as follows : " Nevertheless he is a man whom it is difficult to judge ; one

would implicate oneself too far in greatly praising him, yet it is easy to be unfair to him. Some of his productions seem to come from a man in delirium, unintelligible to his readers and to himself; yet, in other places you find him original and stimulating, while displaying a wit which lacks taste but on this very account comes all the nearer to being genius. If you happen to open one of his works at random you may find it difficult to decide to read him; but there is scarcely one of his books you will not finish if once you have started it. One comes upon pages often so extraordinary (in the best sense of the word) that he keeps expectancy alive to the very end, though it is often disappointed.

He nearly always chooses ignoble subjects, and if he treated them in superior fashion that would be a speciality and his justification; but the chief reproach from which he cannot be absolved is that he is nearly always coarse and indecent, that he delights in pictures that often wound modesty and delicacy as much as taste and reason. Although his powers of invention are varied and prolific, I shall not praise his imagination, for it is easy to make a show of this if one let it run at random. But even if some delicate and fastidious people smile at me, I own to having read all he has written, making my way through the bustle and sometimes the filth that render him no company for the squeamish reader, and I confess that, if I have frequently shrugged my shoulders in scorn, I have often laughed, shuddered and wept.

Indeed, the *Paysan Perverti* is the work of a man of power. The vigour of manly genius, however unruly, prevails throughout; the abundance of an excessive but rich imagination gives life to these pictures, which few hands would have chosen to draw. It unfolds itself in scenes of which taste and delicacy may disapprove, but which are suffused with a forcible art one must admire. Restif de la Bretonne is the Teniers of the novel, his book is *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* of the common people."

This was written before *Monsieur Nicolas* had appeared,

and it seems to me to be admirable, and, for its time, remarkable. I do not think that Tilly could have read *all* Restif's works, as he professes, or he would not have said that, once having started on them, one could not leave his books unfinished, for with several of them exactly the opposite is only too often the case. One simply *cannot* finish them. But the rest of the criticism it would be difficult to improve upon.

It is true that Restif's books are sometimes indecent in places, but it must be remembered that he boasted that he had emboldened the French language to speak of everything, and to call things by their right names, and this determination often led him into indelicacy. Nevertheless, he frequently shows an unexpected prudery in using Latin words for the more obscene expressions, and even these he abbreviates. Also, some French words he spells in reverse order, as was his custom with the names of actual people, and several comparatively innocuous words he prints with asterisks, such as " p****n " for *putain*, " ga*** " for *garce*, " p**elle " for *pucelle* and even " c****** " for *culotte*, which seems curiously inconsistent. As he printed so many of his own books himself, the original editions are interesting as showing his personal idiosyncrasies in these matters, and his system of orthography, of which he was very proud, and which in some instances he carried to the extent of eccentricity. One of the most rational of these peculiarities is the spelling of *garçon*, for instance, as *garson*, saying, quite truly, that the word is a diminutive of *gars*. On this subject Havelock Ellis says : " By this plastic force on language he belongs to the class of French masters of literature, with Rabelais at their head, which has later included the Goncourts and Huysmans and Léon Bloy and Joseph Delteil. This same force he exerts also in transforming into speech the things he has seen or felt, so that in his pages we may meet with experiences, even common and familiar experiences, which seem never to have been put into speech before. That is one of the

secrets of his fresh vivid direct manner. When he is at the best in narrative—swift, easy, flexible, familiar—he belongs less to his own age than to ours." Restif, indeed, can at times be curiously modern, and at others almost archaic, and this is but one of the " assemblage of contrasts " which Cubières describes him as being composed of.

Restif, like Rousseau, had a feeling for wild Nature that was something new in French literature up to that time. In *Monsieur Nicolas*, writing of when he first went to Paris and Bicêtre as a boy of twelve he says : " The outskirts of Paris are charming. I was delighted, or rather astonished, by the beautiful houses which bordered the road on either hand. But their grandeur excited no desire in me ; I coveted nothing except perhaps the parks ; I would have liked to live in the woods, in the half-wild places, provided that the house was a long way off ! I experienced what few men can have felt : the emotions of a savage brought over to France on seeing our beautiful things. If he had a soul and was not one of those automata, of whom we have so many and who have never felt in their lives, all the new things would at first depress him ; later he might acquire a taste for them ; but his liking would be somewhat mixed, and so far different from that of our fashionable world : if English gardens did not exist, he would invent them, but without our finical trivialities. Ah, if I had seen an English garden at that time, it would have put me in an ecstasy ; I could never have left it. . . . Had I been better informed, and had I known how to go to America, I should have flown thither—not in search of a fortune, but to live as a savage. This was the only manner of life which would have satisfied me ; to civilise me was to do violence to my nature."

And in the fourth letter of the *Paysan*, Edmond, writing to his brother soon after his arrival at Auxerre from the farm at Sacy, says : " For some time I have been in a peculiar state, especially on rest days. When I wake up in the mornings and before I have quite realised where I

am, it seems to me that I am still at home. I hear, or at least I think I hear, the noise of the farm-boys in the yard, the lowing of the cattle and the whinnying of the horses ; I think I hear the sheep and the crowing of the cocks ; I start, and rub my eyes, and my happiness vanishes with the remains of my sleep. Alas ! I am in the town, and I must get up, only to endure suffering and contempt and the jaundice of boredom ! No one was ever more born to be a peasant than I am, and I no longer am one ! This morning, dear Pierrot, the tears ran from my eyes as from two fountains, in remembering one Corpus Christi eve when I was cutting sainfoin in our valley of Vau-de-Lannard. How happy I was ! everything was for me a subject of delight ; the half-cloudy weather, the cry of the solitary wheatear, even the grass, the grass on the hillsides, had a soul that spoke to mine. The fruit of the wild bramble seemed to me delicious ; I ate some to refresh my mouth, and I blessed the Author-of-all-goodness, who has given fruit to the bramble for the solace of Man. Then the sound of the big bell fell on my ear in the profound silence of that solitude, and my heart leapt to hear it ; my impression was that it harmonised with the singing of the birds, and that it redoubled their desire to sing. I felt myself inspired to sing a hymn to Nature, and I intoned it, without rhyme or measure, but with an inward pleasure which they here call enjoyment of oneself, and which I no longer know. Ah ! if happiness was there, why then try to seek for it here ? "

Restif certainly had the country in his blood, but he was also an acute observer in the town, and he has left us many vivid pictures of the life of the streets in Paris. Though he may be disappointing as regards the scenes he must have witnessed during the Revolution—apart from a few striking vignettes—he evidently took notice of what was happening around him, and he occasionally makes some interesting observations. For example, in *Les Nuits*, he states that many of those who mounted the scaffold

and met their death with apparently the greatest fortitude "were half-dead already," and that the mute heroism with which they met their fate was often but a semi-comatose condition induced by hopeless despair, and a moral syncope which beneficently paralysed all mental and bodily efforts.

Again, in *Les Posthumes*, he noted that "the young ragamuffins of from fourteen to sixteen years of age played a great part in the Revolution," and in the blood-thirsty and often obscene scenes which took place in the streets. His disgust with the behaviour of the mob was none the less because he really ardently desired the welfare of the people and the improvement of their conditions of living. He always regarded himself in the light of a social reformer, and many were the schemes and ideas that he promulgated to that end.

One never knows, in any of his books, when one may suddenly be confronted—perhaps in the middle of a story—with a long disquisition on some social subject. In this he strongly resembles de Sade. Here, for instance, is an abridged version of his ideas on the subject of Population, placed, *à propos de bottes*, in the middle of *Monsieur Nicolas*.

"It is in Nature's plan that one male should suffice for several females, and furthermore the preservation of the female is much more important than that of the male. With the present system of large armies and Christian monogamy the population is bound gradually to decrease, and is, in fact, decreasing. If Princes want to put half their male subjects under arms and so compel them to celibacy, they can do so if they take the greatest care of the women, prevent prostitution or regulate it as proposed in my *Pornographe*, and give two wives to every civilian. They could also increase the Navy, which already consumes so many men, if they allowed any sailor's wife, who was not pregnant when her husband left her, to get one child, or two, according to the duration of the voyage, by some young and honest lad chosen by her husband, whom

the latter can legitimise by acknowledging them. Entomb a third of our men in the mines, O barbarous Princes, squander another third in celebate monks and priests, but replace these losses exactly, by providing for the subsistence of the women they would have made fertile and then giving them to the men that are left. But if you do not want such a complete revision of your laws, at least carry out the suggestions in my *Pornographe ;* then there will be no more wasted women. All will bear children, and you will have males enough for all your needs, your uses and abuses, your soldiers, monks and celibates ; enough for eunuchs even, especially if you either forbid women to become nuns or make nuns bear. And your public women will give you as many children as though you kept all the males at home. (All this is easier of execution and more urgent now, under the Republic, since we have been forced to increase our armies and, at the same time, have returned homeless nuns and monks without pension to ordinary life). . . . It is an infamous paradox that a large population is not a good thing. . . . M. de Voltaire, otherwise so great and estimable a man, is always casting doubt upon the vast populations common among the ancient peoples, and this is because he argues from our own destructive system. He cannot understand that far more children were born in former times ; he does not consider that, though the men made war and perished by thousands, the females were all productive and made good the waste ; that, if a country was devastated, it added to the population of the conquerer, because all the females were preserved and had children by their masters, or by other men to whom they were given, thus furnishing native-born colonists for the devastated region. Nowadays, if we tried to colonise, we should depopulate our country as Spain has done. . . . Our social order is detestable ! I cannot conceive what puritanical and destructive genius has possessed the human race since the Christian era began. The union of the sexes has been made a blemish and a shame ;

merriment and all that contributes to it a vice ; pleasure, a crime. . . . Sanction, oh, sanction pleasure, most savage law-giver, it comes so rarely ! . . . If all men were equals as they used to be, and as I propose to present them in my *Anthropographe*, a hundred thousand of them could live in the same area that now supports but fifteen thousand. So may the mighty Voltaire cease to cast doubt upon history, sacred and profane. Men actually did exist in the numbers reported, or approximately so. You did not expect this excursus, friend Reader ? I did not expect it myself when I began to write ; it is just a passing kick at prejudice and superstition." And then the story continues on its way !

He frequently inveighs against puritans. " I have already risen against puritans, these tyrants of mankind, these infamous Robespierres who would have everything drab and icy as their own cold hearts. . . . Puritans are no more than stupid children in questions of morality. But there is another thing which never occurs to them : that happiness is everything to the Human Race, and if, which is impossible, virtue is opposed to happiness, then virtue must be proscribed. But only the counterfeit virtue of the puritan is opposed to happiness ; virtue itself can never be so." This was written in 1795, when Robespierre was dead ; and it is just as true to-day.

One of Restif's most noticeable traits is his entire lack of humour. If we ever come across a gleam of it which is rare—it is entirely unconscious on his part, for when he becomes ridiculous he is quite unaware of it. He had no wit or irony, and he disliked and misunderstood them. He took himself and his work far too seriously to indulge in such things, and was convinced that his personal experiences and feelings were of the greatest universal interest and exceedingly valuable to the world. When he thought himself profound he was most apt to be stupid. In some ways he is one of the least sophisticated of writers, and his obvious sincerity redeems many of his faults. His style was considered by his contemporaries to be rough and

uncouth ; certainly it is in no sense polished, but it has a vigour and forthrightness which is seldom met with in his period ; on the whole it is well adapted to his aims in writing. That he is a most unequal writer cannot be denied. He has pages of a certain kind of beauty—vivid, touching and enthralling. But he also has pages of sheer banality and bathos, almost impossible to read. It is curious that his contemporaries generally considered Restif as one of the most moral and commendable writers of his time, and even his most constant adversaries, such as La Harpe, praised him on that score. They judged the morality of a book by the impression which the whole work left upon the reader, by its tendency and the conclusions to be drawn from it. Incidental scenes and descriptions were subservient to the whole, and even if somewhat "free," may only enhance and enforce the total moral effect. By this standard, it must be admitted that Restif generally is on the side of the angels, and as he himself declares, his intentions were always good, but he sometimes adopted some rather curious methods in carrying them out.

The influence of other writers upon Restif, such as Rousseau and Richardson, has already been shortly discussed. That of the latter, though admitted, appears to me to have been slight. Rousseau was undoubtedly the contemporary writer whose influence is most apparent, but even that was not immense. There are as many contrasts as resemblances between the two. They were both too self-conscious and took themselves too seriously. Restif was the more naïve, more truthful, more spontaneous, but Rousseau, of course, was by far the greater artist. It has been well said that "one is apt to be amused by Restif's confessions, and to lose patience with those of Rousseau, for there is nothing more wearisome than a confession less complete than it professes to be." Restif's certainly are not of that kind.

Another writer who may possibly have had some influence on Restif is the Abbé du Laurens (1719–97),

author of *Compère Mathieu* (1766), and other works. Restif mentions this author and this book in the *Paysan*, in a letter from Gaudet to Edmond. Lacroix finds in the character of Gaudet d'Arras the type not only of Compère Mathieu but also of the author, Du Laurens, himself. " There is, in fact," he says, " a singular analogy between the two personages. In the exposition of the philosophical ideas of G. d'Arras, in *Monsieur Nicolas* one finds the germ of all the philosophy of Restif." He then goes on to point out certain similarities between d'Arras and Du Laurens. The latter took his vows with the Canons of the Trinity in his eighteenth year, and afterwards fled to Paris where he lived by his pen. He wrote a satire against the Jesuits, and being about to be prosecuted for immorality, again fled, this time first to Holland and then to Frankfort. Lacroix finds a further resemblance between Gaudet's surname " d'Arras," and *La Chandelle d'Arras*, a rather blasphemous and obscene poem by Du Laurens, which caused a considerable stir when it was published in 1765. That Restif had in mind the circumstances of Du Laurens and the tenets of Compère Mathieu in delineating the character of Gaudet, is quite possible, even probable, for we know that he was aware of both.

Of subsequent writers who have almost certainly been influenced by Restif, undoubtedly the greatest and also the nearest to him in spirit is Balzac, as I have already stated. Paul Bourget has said that the great writers nearly always had an inferior " double," who preceded them, as if Nature had to experiment first before finally producing the finished masterpiece. In this sense, Balzac's preceding " double " was Restif. The similarity was first pointed out by Monselet in 1853, and has been referred to by most writers on Restif since then. Vautrin, in *Les Illusions Perdus* and other works of Balzac, has much in common with Gaudet d'Arras, and there is a strong likeness between the discourses of Vautrin in *Le Père Goriot* and the letters which Gaudet writes to Edmond and to Ursule in the *Paysan-Paysanne*. Again, the letter of

Fanchon to Edmée near the end of the last-named book, where she describes the three funerals, and which is the high-water mark of the whole work, is directly analogous to the scene of the death of " The Master " in the second chapter of *Le Médecin de Campagne*, entitled " A travers champs," and which is likewise one of Balzac's best passages. And instances can be multiplied considerably. It is especially in his country scenes and characters that Restif need least fear comparison with his great successor. As I have already said, his peasants and country people have been preferred by many critics to those of Balzac, George Sand and Zola, and after all, he was one of them himself. Even throughout his long life in Paris, the country was always in his heart. Balzac, as we know, was an omnivorous reader, and may well have derived much from the earlier writer, even if often unconsciously. But the difference between them is as that between the sun and the moon.

From the beginning of the present century, Restif's literary stock has consistently risen. His works have received more appreciation than ever before. As there are " Casanovistes," so there are now " Restivistes," the latter as interested in everything concerning Monsieur Nicolas as are the former in the author of the celebrated *Mémoires*. Restif has been likened to Casanova, but to me, at least, there is not the slightest resemblance between them apart from the multiplicity of their amours. Actually, Restif would have strongly disapproved of the Venetian. One of the " Restivistes " was M. le Marquis de Bordes de Fortage, who, in his incomparable library at Bordeaux, had a special case, under lock and key, containing the most complete collection in existence of the original editions of the works of Restif, which was extremely valuable.

It is a concidence that the contemporary and probably the first " Restiviste " should also have been at Bordeaux. This was a lawyer named Marandon, who was a great collector of all the works of Restif, and of everything con-

cerning him, such as his portrait, and so forth. He was the author of the quatrain I have quoted at the end of the first part of this study, which he sent to Restif " as a very feeble token of his esteem and his great veneration," by which Restif was highly gratified. He also christened his only son " Edmé " after his " venerated " author. A writer who can beget such enthusiasm in his readers must surely be of some account !

Studies of and articles on Restif were becoming more and more numerous in France up to 1939. In the Preface to the catalogue of the Restif Exhibition at the Carnavalet in 1934, M. Vaudoyer describes Restif as " this writer at the same time too celebrated and too ignored," which to a certain extent is true, but would have been truer still some thirty years earlier. Interest in him and his work had grown in that period. Perhaps the critic who ranks him most highly is Funck-Brentano, who sums up his estimate thus : " Restif has written some books of silly and extravagant inspiration, and others where one meets with fragments of the rarest beauty. For his simplicity, spontaneity, force and frankness, in conception as well as in expression, Restif is a writer unique in the French eighteenth century. Comparing him with his contemporaries, one can say that, in his best parts, he is above them all. It is true that these best parts would perhaps make but four or five volumes out of the more than two hundred that he published ; but which is the writer of the eighteenth century who has left us the value of more than four volumes to read and re-read ? "

Though it may be admitted that Restif is not an author likely to become generally popular nowadays, both he and his work are of considerable interest and importance. He is too prolix, and for some people, too outspoken, and his books are not easy to come by. But it is curious that he should have been so almost entirely neglected in England. A short notice in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and, strangely enough, another in the *Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography* which dates from about the middle

of the last century—and in which he is described as " a gifted but singularly eccentric writer " and his books, " although stained by licentiousness," are said to " display real genius, and that of a truly original character "—are about the only things in English on Restif, apart from the few mentioned in the beginning of this study. It is to be hoped that in the future there may be more.

The works of Restif may be classified under four headings : Autobiography and History of his Family ; Scenes of Life in Paris and the Provinces ; Novels ; Theories of Social Reforms. Of these, only the first two are of real interest to-day. He is not a great writer, nor one of the masters of French eighteenth-century literature, but he is one of the most original authors in any literature.

II

PERSONAL CONSPECTUS

THE character and personality of Restif de la Bretonne is really a subject for psycho-analysis, but we can only touch the fringe of the matter here. The reason why, in the biographical part of this study, I have dwelt at greater length upon his youth and adolescence is because those were the formative years, when the foundations were laid of the character afterwards developed in the adult man.

We have already seen that he was a sensitive, nervous, shy child, with a self-conscious pride that later became still more marked. It must be admitted that he was a more attractive character in his earlier years than in his later ones. In some respects he hardly " grew-up " at all, and retained to the end many childish traits and characteristics. He always remained highly emotional, and in many ways extremely sentimental. He was also a tremendous egotist, and, more than the average man, was the centre of his own universe. That he was generous and kind-hearted in a high degree is admitted by all who knew him at all intimately, and he frequently inspired a deep affection in his friends who, while realising his failings and his weaknesses, admired his many good qualities. One of the latter was his conscientiousness. In his profession of printer he was always regarded as a steady and reliable worker, as well as a hard one. His powers of application to the job in hand were great, as was also his energy. His concentration on writing, when a theme was in his mind, was tremendous. Indeed, his pen was too facile. He wrote far too much and too quickly. Had he had more restraint in literary composition and more power of self-criticism, he would have been a much greater author. But then he would not

have been Restif de la Bretonne. It was characteristic of the man that what was tumultuously seething and bubbling in his mind and in his heart simply had to be poured out torrentially and indiscriminately on to paper, in black and white. Any idea of selection, any literary fastidiousness, for him simply did not exist. That is one of the reasons why many of his literary contemporaries called him " vulgar," and said that he " lacked taste." But it is also one of the reasons why *Monsieur Nicolas* is one of the greatest examples of self-revelation that exist, only fully equalled as such, perhaps, by the *Diary* of Samuel Pepys.

The most unfortunate event in Restif's life was his marriage to Agnès Lebègue. They were entirely unsuited to each other. But it must be said that Agnès has been treated unfairly and too unkindly by most writers on the subject, who have taken too much at their face-value Restif's unending vituperations and tirades against her. In relation to her, all his worst qualities appear. It became such an obsession with him that he always imputed all his misfortunes and unhappinesses—generally due to his own actions or to purely extraneous circumstances—to her. He never misses an opportunity of vilifying her, and it is noticeable that he always speaks of her by her maiden name, " Agnès Lebègue," never just " Agnès," or " Mme. Restif," and very seldom as " my wife," as though he could not bear to think that she bore his name. As has already been said, *La Femme Infidelle*, in which she is the central figure, is one of the most vitriolic books that has ever been written. But that she was not so black as he invariably paints her, and was, indeed, very far from being the " monster " he depicts, is evident from the testimony of others, especially that of Joubert, who was a sensible, sensitive and high-minded man. To him, she was attractive, intelligent, capable and companionable. And many of Restif's friends bear witness to the same effect. They all deplored the quarrels between the two, and especially Restif's openly expressed vindictive-

ness and spite against her. That she was high-spirited is obvious, and from the sexual point of view, was probably not much more virtuous than he was himself, but not to the extent which he asserts. It is very obvious that there were faults on both sides, but, when all is said, it is equally obvious that Restif must have been one of the most difficult men to live with domestically that have ever existed. This is confirmed by his subsequent quarrels and disagreements with both his daughters, when they tried to live with him in his later years. And surely his wife had just cause of complaint against him when, a few years after their marriage and with two children to provide for, he impetuously threw up his work as foreman-printer, which produced a regular and certain income, and took up the profession of author, the financial results of which were neither regular nor certain, thereby reducing Agnès, who had always been accustomed to a certain amount of comfort and well-being, to a state of comparative poverty, wherein she had to take up some work and earn some money herself for the bare necessities of life. It is also practically certain that Restif used some of his wife's own money to pay for the production of his earlier books. These facts could not have been conducive to connubial peace. Restif is always bewailing that if only he had married another woman his whole life would have been different and happier. This is extremely doubtful. Unless the chosen one had been an entirely docile and submissive creature—and in that case Restif would most likely have become bored with her—the same situations would almost certainly have been bound to have arisen. Restif was hardly what may be termed a " domesticated " man. He was too highly imbued with the artistic and vagabond spirit, and would in any case have made a trying and " difficult " husband. And above all, his sexual temperament was entirely and quite abnormally promiscuous—an inevitable and fruitful source of trouble in any household. On the whole, one cannot entirely withold one's sympathy from Restif's wife, whoever she

L'ATTENTION DANGEREUSE.

Dédié à Madame Ville de Tours

Pour son Bureau de Charité

Par son très humble et très obéissant serviteur Tarral

Ph. Boucher f.t peintre du Roi.

Se trouve à Paris chez l'auteur rue du Petit Bourbon attenant la Foire St. Germain.

J. F. Daullé Sculp.

Imprimé par Robin

might have been, but Agnès Lebègue was obviously not the best choice he could have made, though she has been too harshly judged by posterity.

The sexual side of Restif's psychology is, at the same time, the most important and the most difficult aspect to deal with adequately, especially in an English book intended for general circulation, and here we can but briefly skirt the subject. That he was tremendously and abnormally over-sexed is evident from his very earliest years. The matter of sex with him was an overwhelming obsession, deep down in his very being, pervading all his works as well as his entire life. In this respect he was unusually and extraordinarily precocious, and there is nothing in the known characters of his parents, and but little in the circumstances of his early environment, to explain the life-long domination that sex held over him. It was the very basis of his temperament.

From his earliest years he could never resist the attraction of a pretty face, and above all, of a dainty foot and shoe. As he grew to maturity, so this trait grew too, and continued into his old age, when his physical powers had declined, but it still governed his mentality. He himself speaks of the " erotic frenzy " which all too often completely dominated him, and he justly says that " had I been a monk, a Carthusian for example, I should have been the most guilty or the most miserable of men." He admits the effect that the reading of erotic books had upon his highly inflammable nature, and he gives an instance of this when upon one occasion he was reading *Le Portier des Chartreux* in bed and no less than six girls happened to call upon him separately and unexpectedly, quite with unforeseen consequences to themselves. But one of his peculiar doctrines was that all such sporadic encounters should result in paternity, and he easily persuaded himself that in most instances such was the case. It has been computed that, according to his own accounts, he believed that, by the age of sixty, he had propagated not less than 217 daughters. In this, of course, he has

let his imagination run away with him. He never liked to think that any of his efforts, in whatever sphere, were wasted.

Of his shoe-fetishism, I have already spoken, and quoted some of his remarks about it. It is a commoner phenomenon than is generally recognised, and with Restif it was in his very blood. He records the first instance of it when he was four years old, and it remained with him to the end. As we have seen, it was the inspiration of some of his books, and, incidentally, it led him into many adventures. He could never resist the impulse to follow a tiny foot shod in a dainty high-heeled shoe. The face and even the figure were of little importance. If they were attractive, so much the better, but if they were not, it mattered little. Charpentier has said : " His fetishism was, and remains, the perfect type of fetishism of the foot and of the shoe ; and Restif, in making himself, in his works, the interpreter and the propagator of this trait, and all his life being the apostle of it, deserves to give his name to this sexual manifestation. Since the Marquis de Sade and Sacher Masoch have given their names to the erotic practices described in their works, why should not be given to the simple fetishism of the shoe the name of *Restifisme ?* " Why not, indeed ? The term " Eonism " has already been given to the followers of the Chevalier D'Eon, males who prefer to dress themselves in female attire.

But if Restif's shoe-fetishism was with him from the beginning, his other sexual aberration—namely, his incest complex—did not show itself until comparatively late in life. M. Maurice Heine believes that the first literary expression of Restif's " incest paternal " mania is to be found in *La Dernière Avanture d'un Homme de* 45 *ans*, which was written in 1782 and published the following year. This was immediately after his affair with Sara, who, we know, was thirty years his junior, and who called him *père*, *papa*, *cher petit papa*, and he called her his *fille chérie*. But we must also remember that the " incest fraternal "

theme had appeared in 1775 in *Le Paysan Perverti*, as between Edmond and Ursule. The idea appears to have become still more insistent with him in his later years, for as I have already said, in the *Anti-Justine* it is the prevailing theme, and in the unpublished *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux*, of the manuscript of which only a few fragments are known to exist, there is a defence of incest which is strangely reminiscent of a similar passage in *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, which he so much abused, by his "monster," the Marquis de Sade. (Restif applies the term "monster" only to three people—his wife, his son-in-law, Augé, and the Marquis.) He carried this mania to excess in his imagination, and it becomes fantastic and ridiculous in the number of young girls with whom he had amours and immediately afterwards, by "the thermometer of his heart" and the voluptuous turn of their legs and feet, recognised as being his own illegitimate daughters. But it should be emphasised that, so far as is known or can be traced, Restif never actually committed incest himself. It was purely mental, and it was the *idea* which excited him. It very probably was merely a form of senile dementia, just as the erotics of de Sade, who did *not* practise the things he wrote about, were the result of long years of sexual suppression. It thus is evident that the incest idea was quite secondary to his shoe-fetishism, and that while the latter was actual, the former was only mental. Restif, in spite of what he wrote, can be exonerated from at least this moral delinquency.

The physical appearance of Restif has already been described, at different periods of his life, from accounts given by himself and by people who knew him. He was exceptionally strong and full of physical energy. He could lift tremendous weights and could run faster than most people. His health, on the whole and especially in his younger years, was extremely good. It was only in later life that he began to fail. His many attacks of venereal complaints were bound to affect him, and he suffered from retention of urine, from which he had to be

regularly relieved. With his usual frankness, he gives us full and detailed accounts of his various illnesses, concerning which there is a long passage in *Monsieur Nicolas*, and, as we have seen, one of the intended but never written supplements thereto was to have been entitled *Mes Maladies*. These details are interesting to students of medicine and diseases, and occasionally throw light on the remedies and treatments of the period, but they need no longer detain us here. Restif's temper was choleric, and he was sensitive to any criticism and passionate against anything which he considered injustice, either for himself or others, but he generally and quite honestly considered himself as a victim of circumstances rather than as being in the wrong himself, though he often admits his own faults. In the company of men he was usually very quiet and reserved, which was due to the shyness and sensitiveness that remained from his early youth, but in the company of women he was quite at home, and could be vivacious, amusing, interesting and charming, when he liked. He was subject to moods of intense depression, and his last years were much embittered by poverty and a sense of denial of the recognition which he considered was due to him as a writer. He was no hero, and kept well in the background during the dangerous times of the Revolution, with the timidity which had been one of the characteristics of his youth and adolescence. During the Terror, he often thought each day might be his last and in his imagination there flashed in an instant visions of the bloodthirsty juries of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the interrogation, the condemnation, the Bastille, the guillotine, and his severed head rolling in the sand. One cannot blame him, with such sights as he saw before his very eyes, in the streets, at this nerve-wracking period. He had the greatest respect and veneration for his father, a deep affection for his mother, and undoubtedly an aptitude for friendship. His apparent brusqueness of manner and occasional sullenness in the presence of company was generally a barrier

he was constitutionally compelled to put up by his innate shyness and timidity. His nature was composed of a bundle of contradictions. For example, filled with the best intentions towards his fellow beings and firmly convinced of his own high moral purpose, he lived a life which can only be described as dissolute, and often wrote in a manner which outsteps the bounds of decency, and yet he himself saw no inconsistency in this. Besides his undoubted *erotomania*, he also had what has been described as a *mythomania :* a dreamy side to his nature—which often impelled him to describe people and events and incidents as he would have liked them to have been, rather than as they actually were ; and yet this does not seriously detract from his general veracity and truthfulness. The most obvious example of this dream-like quality is his life-long mental devotion to Jeannette Rousseau, the " divinity " of his boyhood, to whom he practically never spoke and who he never saw during the last fifty years of his life, and yet she always remained in his mind as his ideal—his deepest and one and only purely platonic affection.

His life and personality and his literary work are so inextricably woven together that it is almost impossible to deal with them separately—there is so much of each contained in the other—and it has been said, not quite truly, that all his books are but chapters in his own life. But it is, perhaps, one of the reasons why his avowed autobiography, *Monsieur Nicolas*, is his highest literary achievement and his most interesting book.

Havelock Ellis has described Restif as " a remarkable figure in a remarkable epoch which he most vividly illustrated," and says that he " always lived in contact with the pavement ; he was plebeian in spirit as well as in life, and it was, indeed, because he was so close in feeling to the streets, as he was earlier to the countryside, that he was able to produce pictures of everyday life in town and country such as we seek in vain among more distinguished writers of his time." We may leave it at that.

Having for some considerable time lingered, in a literary sense, in the company of Restif de la Bretonne, it is not without regret that I take my leave of him. I still like to think of him as a boy, in the fields and pastures of Sacy ; I still like to picture him wandering by night in the streets of old Paris, with his broad-brimmed hat, his big cloak and his lantern, the *Spectateur Nocturne*, *l'Hibou*, perhaps carving one of his inscriptions on a stone wall on the Ile Saint-Louis ; but above all do I like to recall him as a youth, in the first flush of manhood, in the delightful old town of Auxerre. Once again, in happier times, may it be my fortune to revisit the Maison Fournier, where he worked and where Mme. Parangon lived ; where, for the last time he saw Jeannette Rousseau, passing the door of the shop, close by the charming old clock tower, still standing exactly as he so often saw it. Once more may I gaze down from the walls of that attractive city on the hill, as he so often must have done, upon the placidly flowing waters of the Yonne.

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PART IV

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dedié à Monsieur le Comte de la Tour d'Auvergne
Marechal des Camps et Armées du Roy
Par Sa Tres Humble et
Tres Obeissante Ser.
Le Prince de tout le monde
souvent le mien d'Amarante

Boucher del. pin

A Paris chez l'Auteur rue Neuve St Augustin la Seconde Porte Cochere à droite en entrant par la rue Dauphine.

Moreland sculp.

I

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8. " Le Marquis de T . . . (Tavan), ou l'École de la Jeunesse, tirée des Mémoires recueillis par N.-E.-A. Desforets, homme-d'affaires de la Maison de T . . ." A Londres. A Paris, chez Le Jay. 1771, 1 vol.
9. " Adèle de Com . . . (Comminge), ou Lettres d'une fille à son père." Se trouve à Paris, chez Edme, libraire. 1772, 1 vol.
10. " La Femme dans les Trois États de Fille, d'Épouse, et de Mère. Histoire morale, comique et veritable." A Londres, et à Paris, chez De-Hansy. 1773, 3 vols.
11. " Le Ménage Parisien, ou Déliés et Sotentout." Imprimé à la Haie. 1773, 2 vols.
12. " Les Nouveaux Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité." Par M. le M . . . de Br . . . Imprimé à la Haye, et se trouve à Paris, chez la veuve Duchesne ; et De-Hansy. 1774, 1 vol.
13. " Le Fin Matois, ou Histoire du Grand Taquin, traduite de l'espagnol de Quévédo ; avec des Notes historiques et

politiques, nécessaires pour la parfaite intelligence de cet auteur." Imprimé à la Haye. 1776, 3 vols.

(Actually appeared in 1775.)

14. " Le Paysan Perverti, ou les Dangers de la Ville. Histoire récente, mise au jour d'après les véritables Lettres des Personnages." Par N.-E. Rétif de la Bretone—without name or place of publication, and without illustrations. 1775, 4 vols.

(The second edition : Imprimé à la Haie, et se trouve à Paris, chés Esprit, libraire de S. A. S. Mgr. le duc de Chartres, au Palais-Royal, sous le vestibule, au piéd du grand-escalier, 1776, 4 vols. The illustrations to this work did not appear till 1784.)

15. (" L'Educographe.") " Le Nouvel Emile ou L'Education Pratique." A Genève, et se trouve à Paris, chés P. J. Costard, 1770–76, 4 vols.

(The half-title : Idées Singulières. L'Educographe.)

16. " L'École des Pères." Par N. E. Rétif de la Bretone En France, et à Paris, chés la veuve Duchêne, Humblot, Le-Jai et Doréz, Delalain, Esprit, Mérigot, libraires. 1776, 3 vols.

17. " Les Gynographes, ou Idées de deux honnêtes-femmes sur un projet de règlement proposé à toute l'Europe pour mettre les Femmes à leur place, et opérer le bonheur des deux sexes ; avec des Notes historiques et justificatives, suivies des noms des Femmes célèbres ; Recueillis par N.-E. Rétif-de-la-Bretonne, éditeur de l'ouvrage." A la Haie, chés Gosse et Pinet, Et se trouve à Paris, chés Humblot. 1777, 1 vol.

18. " Le Quadragénaire, ou l'Age de renoncer aux passions ; histoire utile à plus d'un Lecteur." A Genève. Et se trouve à Paris, chés la veuve Duchêne. 1777, 2 vols. Avec 15 figures.

(This was the first of Restif's books to be published with illustrations.)

19. " Le Nouvel Abeilard, ou Lettres de deux amans qui ne se sont jamais vus." A Neufchatel. Et se trouve à Paris, chez la veuve Duchesne. 1778, 4 vols.

(Contains 10 illustrations.)

20. " La Vie de Mon Père." Par l'Auteur du " Paysan Perverti." A Neufchatel, et se trouve à Paris, chés la veuve Duchesne. 1779, 2 vols. (With 14 illustrations and two charming medallion portraits of the author's Father and Mother when young, one on the title-page of each volume.)

21. " La Malédiction Paternelle : Lettres sincères véritables de N . . . , à ses Parens, ses Amis, et ses Maîtresses ; avec les Réponses : Recuillies et publiées par Timothée Joly, son éxécuteur Testamentaire." Imprimé à Leipsick, par Büschel, et se trouve à Paris chés la dame v^e^ Duchesne. 1780, 3 vols.

(With a frontispiece to each volume.)

22. " Les Contemporaines." Three series in 42 vols., with 283 illustrations.

(i) " Les Contemporaines, ou Avantures des plus jolies Femmes de l'age présent : Recueillies par N . . . , et publiées par Timothée Joly, de Lyon, dépositaire de ses manuscripts." Imprimé à Leïpsick, par Büschel. Et se trouve à Paris, chés Belin. 1780–82, 17 vols.

(ii) " Les Contemporaines-du-Commun, ou Avantures des belles Marchandes, Ouvrières, etc., de l'age présent. Recueillies par N.-E.-.R . . . —D.-.L.-.B . . . " Imprimé à Leïpsick, par Büschel. Et se trouve à Paris. 1782–83, 13 vols.

(iii) " Les Contemporaines-par-Gradation : ou Avantures des Jolies-Femmes, de l'age actuel, suivant la gradation des principaux États de la Société : Recueillies par N.-E.-R . . . –D.-L.-B . . . " Imprimé à Leïpsick, par Büschel. Et se trouve à Paris, chés la d^e^. v^e^. Duchesne. 1783, 12 vols.

23. " La Découverte Australe, par un Homme volant, ou le Dédale français ; nouvelle très philosophique, suivie de la Lettre d'un Singe, etc." Imprimé à Leïpsick : et se trouve à Paris. No date, but the half-title has 1781. 4 vols.

(With 23 illustrations.)

24. " L'Andrographe, ou Idées d'un honnête-homme sur un projet de règlement, proposé à toutes les Nations de l'Europe, pour opérer une Réforme générale des mœurs, et par elle, le bonheur du Genre humain ; avec des Notes historiques et justificatives. Recueillies par N.-E.-Rétif-de-la-Bretone, éditeur de l'ouvrage." A la Haie, chés Gosse et Pinet. Et se trouve à Paris, chés la dme veuve Duchesne, et Belin, et Merigot-jeune. 1782, 1 vol.

25. " La Dernière Avanture d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq Ans ; nouvelle utile à plus d'un lecteur." A Genève. Et se trouve à Paris, chés Regnault. 1783, 1 vol.

(With a frontispiece to each of the two parts into which the book is divided.)

26. " La Prévention Nationale, action adaptés à la Scène ; avec deux variantes, et les Faits qui lui servent de base." A la Haie, et se trouve à Paris, chés Regnault. 1784, 3 vols.

(The second volume has " Par N. E. Rêtif-de-la-Bretone " on the title-page. There are 10 illustrations.)

27. " La Paysane Pervertie ou les Dangers de la Ville, ou Histoire d'Ursule R . . . , sœur d'Edmond, le Paysan, mise-au jour d'après les vèritables Lettres des Personages, avec 114 estampes ; par l'auteur du Paysan Perverti." Imprimé à La Haie. Et se trouve à Paris chés la dame veuve Duchesne. 1784, 4 vols.

(There are actually 38 illustrations.)

28. " Les Figures du Paysan Perverti."

Rétif-de-la-Bretone	invenit
Binet	delineavit
Berthet et Leroi	incuderunt

(Without name or date. It contains 82 illustrations.)

(There was a similar volume for *La Paysane*, containing the

38 illustrations, making 120 for the two works. The illustrations to *Le Paysan* were inserted in the new edition of 1784, which was dated 1776. *Les Figures*, as above, was issued in 1785.)

29. " Le Paysan et la Paysane Pervertis ; ou Les Dangers de la Ville ; Histoire récente, mise au jour d'après les véritables Lettres des pérsonages." Par N.-E.-Rétif-de-la-Bretone." Imprimé à la Haie. 1784, 4 vols.

(This redaction of the two works into one was not actually published until 1787, though dated three years earlier. It contains the 120 illustrations to the two books.)

30. " Les Veillées du Marais ; ou Histoire du grand prince Oribeau, Roi de Mommonie, au pays d'Evinland ; et de la vertueuse Princesse Oribelle, de Lagenie : Tirés des anciénnes-Annales-Irlandaises, et recemment-translatée en-français : Par Nichols-Donneraill, du comté de Korke, Descendant de de l'Auteur." Imprimé à Waterford, capitale de Mommonie. 1785, 2 vols.

31. " Les Françaises, ou XXXIV Exemples choisis dans les Mœurs actuelles, Propres à diriger les Filles, les Femmes, les Epouses et les Mères." A Neufchatel, et se trouve à Paris. Chés Guillot. 1786, 4 vols.

(With 34 illustrations.)

32. " Les Parisiennes, ou XL caractères généraux, Pris dans les Mœurs actuelles, Propres à servir à l'instruction des Personnes-du-Sexe ; Tirés des Mémoires du nouveau Lycée-des-mœurs." A Neufchatel, et se trouve à Paris. Chés Guillot. 1787, 4 vols.

(With 20 illustrations.)

33. " Les Nuits de Paris, ou le Spectateur Nocturne." A Londres, et se trouve à Paris chés les libraires nommes en tête du catalogue. 1788–94, 16 parts in 8 vols.

(The first 14 parts appeared in 1788, and with a new title-page in 1791. The fifteenth part appeared in 1790, with the title of *La Semaine Nocturne*. The sixteenth part appeared in 1794. There are 18 illustrations.)

34. " La Femme Infidelle." A la Haye, et se trouve à Paris, chez Maradan. 1788, 4 vols.

35. " Ingénue Saxancour, ou la femme séparée : Histoire propre à demontrer combien il est dangereux pour les Filles de se marier par entêtement et avec précipitation, malgré leurs Parens : Ecrite par Elle-même." A Liége, et se trouve à Paris, chés Maradan. 1789, 3 vols.

36. " Le Thesmographe, ou Idées d'un honnête-homme sur un projet de règlement, Proposé à toutes les Nations de l'Europe, pour operer une Reforme generale, des Loix ; avec des Notes historiques." A La-Haye, chés Gosse-Junior et Changuion. Et se trouve à Paris, chés Maradan. 1789, 1 vol.

37. " Monument du Costume physique et moral de la fin du Dix-huitième Siècle, ou Tableaux de la Vie." (Texte de N.-E.

Restif de la Bretonne), ouré de Figures dessinées et gravées par M. Moreau le jeune, et par d'autres célèbres Artistes. A Neuwied sur le Rhin, chez la Société typographique. 1789, 1 vol.

(Large folio size, containing 37 pages of text and 26 beautiful engravings. It is for the latter that this book is much sought after.)

38. " Tableaux de la Vie, ou les Mœurs du dix-huitième siècle." Avec 17 figures en taille-douce. A Neuwied sur le Rhin, chez la Société typographique, et à Strasbourg, chez J. G. Trenttel. 2 vols. No date.

(This book consists of 17 plates by Moreau le Jeune, reproduced in small size, from the *Monument du Costume*, with a different and much longer text by Restif-de-la-Bretonne, written to more or less suit the pictures. It was probably published in 1790, and the second edition in 1791. It was this book that was published in an English translation in London, in 1790, without Restif's name on the title-page. From the Publishers' Note in the original edition, it is probable that not all of the text is by Restif.)

39. " Le Palais-Royal. Première partie : Les Filles de l'Allée des Soupirs. Seconde partie : Les Sunamites. Troisième partie : Le Converseuses." A Paris, au Palais-Royal d'abord ; puis, Partout ; même chés Guillot, libraire rue des Bernardins. 1790, 3 vols.

(With a frontispiece to each volume.)

40. " L'Année des Dames Nationales ; Histoire jour-par-jour, d'une Femme de France." Par N.-E.-Réstif-de-la-Bretone. A Genève, et se trouve à Paris chés les libraires indiqués à la tête de mon Catalogue. 1791–94, 12 vols.

(With 36 illustrations. Restif was obliged to sell the remaining copies of this book that he possessed, and they were re-issued under the title of *Les Provinciales, ou Histoire des Filles et Femme des Provinces de France*. 1791–94.)

41. " Le Drame de la Vie ; contenant un Homme tout-entier. Pièce en 13 Actes des Ombres, et en 10 Pièces régulières." Imprimé à Paris, à la maison ; chés la v. Duchêne et Mérigot jeune, Louis, libraires. 1793, 5 vols.

(With only one engraving, but that is the well-known portrait of Restif, by Binet.)

42. " Théâtre de N.-E. Restif-de-la-Bretone." A Paris, chés la Dame Veuve-Duchêne, et M. Merigot, jeune. 1793, 5 vols.

43. " Monsieur Nicolas, ou le Cœur-humain dévoilé." Publié par lui-même. Imprimé à la maison ; Et se trouve à Paris (and different addresses are given in different volumes). 1794–97, 16 vols.

(The Autobiography itself occupies the first 12 volumes. Vol. XIII, *Mon Calendrier ;* vol. XIV, *Ma Morale*, et *Ma Religion ;* vol. XV, *Ma Politique ;* vol. XVI, *Mes Ouvrages*. Though the descriptions for the illustrations are given, these never appeared, as has already been explained. A complete

reprint of the first thirteen volumes and vol. XVI was published by Isidore Liseux. Paris, 14 vols., 1883. There have been several abridgements and selections published in Paris. A complete English translation of the Autobiography, without the supplements is : *Monsieur Nicolas, or the Human Heart Unveiled.* The Intimate Memoirs of Restif de la Bretonne. Translated into English by R. Crowdy Mathers. Edited with an Introduction by Havelock Ellis. For subscribers only. John Rodker. London, 6 vols., 4to, 1930–31. Limited to 825 copies. With many reproductions of the original illustrations to Restif's other works. This is extremely well done. There is also *Sara ; an Episode from " Monsieur Nicolas,"* by the same translator, with frontispiece. 1,000 copies, for subscribers only. John Rodker. London, 1 vol., Cr. 8vo, 1927. An excerpt from the above.)

44. " Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas." Par l'auteur du " Cœur-humain-dévoilé." A Paris, de l'imprimerie du cercle-social. L'an V de la République Française. 1796, 3 vols.

45. " L'Anti-Justine, ou les Délices de l'Amour." Par M. Linguet, av. au et en Parlem. Au Palais-Royal ; chez feue la veuve Girouard, très-connue. 1798, 1 vol.

(Though it states " Avec soixante figures " on the title-page, these never appeared. The descriptions for 38 illustrations are given in the book. There is a reprint (Bruxelles) of 1863, which has been much bowdlerised and altered, and is of no interest. A better one is that of 1864 (Amsterdam), which is true to the original, and for which a series of 38 etchings have been done, in conformity with Restif's descriptions. The latest is one issued in Paris a few years ago under the auspices of M. Louis Perceau, the well-known bibliographist of French erotica. A fairly complete translation into English is : *The Double Life of Cuthbert Cockerton Esq., Attorney-at-Law of the City of London. His History and that of His Daughter and some curious anecdotes of other Ladies and their Lovers.* From the original MS. dated 1798. Now published for the first time. 250 copies. Haarlem, 1895. The scenes and characters are English.)

46. " Les Nouvelles Contemporaines, ou Histoires de Quelques Femmes du Jour, par Rétif de la Bretone." A Paris, à l'Imprimerie de la Société Typographique. An 10. 1802, 2 vols., avec un portrait.

47. " Les Posthumes ; Letters reçues après la mort du Mari, par sa Femme, qui le croit à Florence." Par feir Cazotte. Imprimé à Paris, à la maison ; se vend chés Duchêne, libraire. 1802, 4 vols.

(With an engraving at the head of each volume.)

48. " Histoire des Compagnes de Maria, ou Episodes de la vie d'une Jolie Femme ; Ouvrage posthume de Restif de la Bretonne." A Paris, chez Guillaume. 1811, 3 vols.

(The first volume consists of the biography of Restif by

Cubières-Palmézeaux, who also gave the book its title. He probably also " edited " the text.)

[Restif left several manuscripts, which have all been destroyed or have disappeared. Two of which we know there was a considerable part in existence are *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux* and *Les Mille et Une Métamorphoses*. Only a few scattered pages of the former have been discovered.]

49. " Mes Inscriptions." Journal intime de Restif de la Bretonne. Paris. Bibliothèque Elzévirienne. 1889, 1 vol. Edited by Paul Cottin.

(Restif's notebook, discovered in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, into which he had copied his various inscriptions carved on the stones of the walls and bridges of the Ile Saint-Louis in his nocturnal ramblings. With annotations.)

50. " L'Œuvre de Restif de la Bretonne." Texte et notes établis par Henri Bachelin. Paris : Editions du Trianon, 9 vols., 1930–32, with modern illustrations.

(This is a selection of the works of Restif, but its defect is that none of the books chosen are given in entirety and there is no indication of where the numerous omissions occur. They are all abridged. Still, it gives one some idea of Restif's work, and the notes and appendices are often useful, though M. Bachelin has a somewhat irritating manner. The illustrations, by different modern artists, are not, on the whole, very good. The contents of the volumes are as follows :—

i. Les Nuits de Paris, including La Semaine Nocturne, etc.
ii. Les Contemporaines, Les Françaises, Les Parisiennes, Le Palais-Royal, L'Année des Dames Nationales.
iii. Le Pornographe, La Mimographe, Les Gynographes, Le Thesmographe, Le Nouvel Abeilard, Le Nouvel Emile, Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas, Les Posthumes.
iv. La Vie de Mon Père, Lucile, Le Pied de Fanchette, La Fille Naturelle, Adele de C . . . .
v. Le Ménage Parisien, La Femme Infidelle, Ingénue Saxancour.
vi. Le Paysan et la Paysanne Pervertis.
vii. Monsieur Nicolas. I.
viii. Monsieur Nicolas. II.
ix. Mon Calendrier, followed by a few pages of Morale, Religion, Politique, and Mes Ouvrages.

(The edition was limited to 1,625 copies.)

II

WORKS RELATING TO RESTIF

51. Alméras (H. d'). Introductions and Notes to *Les Contemporaines*, 1909 ; *La Vie de Mon Père*, 1910 ; *Le Palais-Royal*. s.d.
52. Assézat (Jules). *Les Contemporaines*, avec une Vie de Restif et des annotations sur son œuvre. 1875–76, 3 vols.

Bachelin (Henry). See Nos. 50 and 72.

53. Barras (Louis). Le Fétichisme. Restif de la Bretonne fut-il fétichiste ? (Thèse soutenue devant la Faculté de médecine de Montpellier.) 1913.
54. Boissin (Firmin). Restif de la Bretonne. Toulouse et Paris. 1875.
55. Boissin (Marins). Introduction to *La Vie de Mon Père*. 1924.
56. Bonneau (Alcide). Introductions to *La Vie de Mon Père*, 1884, and *Sara, ou l'Amour à Quarante-cinq ans*, 1885.

The former is reprinted in *Curiosa*. (Liseux. 1887.)

57. Bourget (Paul). Introduction to *La Vie de Mon Père*. 1929.
58. Brunetière (Ferdinand). Le Roman Experimental (15 Fev., 1880) ; Les origines du Roman Naturaliste (15 Sept., 1881). (In the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*.)
59. Charpentier (Dr. Louis). Restif de la Bretonne, sa perversion fétichiste. Bordeaux, 1912. See also No. 72.

Cottin (Paul). See No. 49.

60. Cubières-Palmézeaux. Notice historique et critique sur la vie et les ouvrages de Restif de la Bretonne. 1811.

(This, the first biography of Restif, appeared in the post-humus *Histoire des Compagnes de Maria* (see No. 48).

Most of it is reprinted by Lacroix (No. 73) and B. de Villeneuve (No. 102).

61. Dühren (Eugen) [Dr. Iwan Bloch]. Rétif de la Bretonne : der Mensch, der Schriftsteller, der Reformator. Berlin, 1906.
62. Ellis (Havelock). From Rousseau to Proust. Boston and New York. 1935.

(This contains a reprint of the admirable Introduction to the English translation of *Monsieur Nicolas* mentioned above, No. 43.)

63. Enfer (L'). de la Bibliothèque Nationale, par Guillaume Apollinaire, Fernand Fleuret et Louis Perceau. 1913.

(For the bibliography of L'Anti-Justine.)

64. Flake (Otto). The Marquis de Sade, with a postscript on Restif de la Bretonne. Translated from the German by Edward Crankshaw. London, 1931.

(The " postscript " is very superficial, and full of errors.)

65. Funck-Brentano (Frantz). Rétif de la Bretonne. Portraits et documents inédits. 1928. With illustrations.

(This is probably, on the whole, the best book on Restif.)

GOURMONT (Remy de). See No. 80.
66. GRAND-CARTERET. Introduction and Notes to an abridged edition of *Monsieur Nicolas*. 1926, 3 vols.
67. GRASILIER (Léonce). Rétif de la Bretonne inconnu. 1927.
(Full of mistakes and surmises.)
68. GREEN (Professor F. C.). Minuet : A critical survey of French and English Literary Idea in the Eighteenth Century. London, 1935.
(A delightful book, and contains the best account of *Le Paysan et la Paysanne Pervertis* known to me.)
69. GREEN (Professor F. C.). French Novelists, Manners and Ideas.
i. From the Renaissance to the Revolution. London, 1928.
ii. From the Revolution to Proust. London, 1931.
(Both volumes have a short account of Restif.)
70. HEINE (Maurice). Rétif de la Bretone et la femme féique.
(In *Minotaure*. No. 6. 1935. See also No. 72.)
71. HENRIOT (Emile). Les Livres du Second Rayon, irréguliers et libertins. 1925.
(Contains a good chapter on Restif.)
72. HIPPOCRATE. Revue d'humanisme médical. Septembre, 1934. Numéro spécial consacre à Restif de la Bretonne. Articles du Dr. Louis Charpentier : *Restif de la Bretonne, étude psychopathologique ;* de Maurice Heine : *La Vieillesse de Rétif de la Bretone ;* d'Henri Bachelin : *Restif de la Bretonne écrivain et moraliste.*
(In commemoration of the bi-centenary of the birth of Restif.)
JACOB (le Bibliophile). See next number.
73. LACROIX (Paul). dit le Bibliophile Jacob. Bibliographie et Iconographie de tous les ouvrages de Restif de la Bretonne. 1875.
(This is the standard bibliography of Restif, and contains a mass of other information concerning him. It also contains a reprint of the greater part of the biography by Cubières-Palmézeaux. See No. 60.)
74. LE BRETON (André). Le Roman au XVIIIe siècle. 1898.
75. LETTRES inédites de Restif de la Bretonne, pour faire suite à la collection de ses œuvres. Nantes, 1883.
(This only runs to 64 pages and consists of the letters written to M. and Mme. Fontaine at Grenoble, by Restif in 1797–98.)
76. LISEUX (Isidore). Introduction and Notes to the reprint of *Monsieur Nicolas*. 1883, 14 vols. An edition Jonquières founded on the Liseux edition was published in 4 vols. in 1924.
77. LOUIS (Dr.). Un Romancier fétichiste : Restif de la Bretonne. In the *Chronique Médicale*, June 1st, 1904.
78. LOUYS (Pierre). Un Roman inédit de Restif. In the *Revue des Livres anciens*, 1913, fascicule I.
(Deals with discovered fragments of *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux*.)
79. MAYNIAL (Edouard). Les Mémoires de Casanova et les conteurs de XVIIIe siècle. In the *Mercure de France*, January 1st, 1928.
80. MERCURE DE FRANCE : Series of " Les Plus Belle Pages," Restif

de la Bretonne. 1925. With an Introduction by Remy de Gourmont.
81. Mireur (Dr. H.). Notes historiques et justificatives et étude critique pour une édition du Porno-*graphe*. Bruxelles. 1879.
82. Monselet (Charles). Rétif de la Bretonne. Sa vie et ses amours; documents inédits ; ses malheurs, sa vieillesse et sa mort ; ce qui a été écrit sur lui ; ses descendants ; catalogue complet et détaillé de ses ouvrages, suivi de quelques extraits. 1854.
83. Monselet (Charles). Oubliés et Dédaignés. 1885.
84. Montaiglon (Anatole de). Préface to the *Monument du Costume* (Tableaux de la vie). 1876.
85. Naughton (Alexandre). Le tableau des mœurs dans les romans de Rétif de la Bretonne. (Thèse), 1929.
86. Nerval (Gérard de). Les Illuminés, ou les Précurseurs du Socialisme. 1852. Contains *Les Confidences de Nicolas*, which had originally appeared in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* in 1850.
87. Palache (John Garber). Four Novelists of the Old Régime : Crébillon fils, Laclos, Diderot, Restif de la Bretonne. London, 1926.
(American in origin. The section on Restif is rather poor, and not at all comprehensive.)
88. Planhol (René de). Les Utopistes de l'amour : Rétif de la Bretonne et le Marquis de Sade. 1921.
89. Pringault (F.). Restif de la Bretonne communiste. In *Le Mercure de France*, December 16th, 1913.
90. Rouger (Gilbert). Rétif auxerrois. In the *Annales de Bourgogne*. 1930, vol. ii, No. 1.
91. Rouger (Gilbert). L'Imprimerie Fournier et le séjour de Rétif à Auxerre. In the *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques et naturelles de l'Yonne*. Auxerre, 1928.
92. Saintsbury (Professor George). A History of the French Novel. Vol. I. From the Beginning to 1800. London, 1917.
(Pp. 452–456 deal with Restif.)
93. Soury (Jules). Études de psychologie. Portraits du XVIIIe siècle. 1879.
94. Tabarant (A.). Le Vrai Visage de Rétif de la Bretonne. 1936.
(The latest full-length biography of Restif. Points out many errors of previous writers and includes the results of fresh discoveries and information.)
95. Talmeyr (Maurice). Avant-propos à une adaptation, en un volume, du *Paysan* et de la *Paysanne Pervertis*. 1888.
96. Terson (Dr. A.). Quelques remarques de Rétif sur le Médecin, le Chirurgien et l'Oculiste. In the illustrated supplement to *Progrès Médical*. 1935.
97. Tilly (Comte Alexandre de). Memoirs of, translated by François Delisle, with an Introduction by Havelock Ellis. London, 1933.
98. Trahard (Pierre). Les Maîtres de la Sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle (1715–89). (Vol. IV, Chapters I, VI, VII, VIII, IX.) 1933.

99. Uzanne (Octave). Notice bio-bibliographique pour une edition du *Pied de Fanchette*. 1881.

100. Vallery-Radot (R.). Restif de la Bretonne réformateur et précurseur. In the *Revue Bleue*, July 5th, 1890, and reprinted in *Un Coin de Bourgogne* (*Le Pays d'Avallon*). 1893.

101. Vaudoyer (Jean Louis). Paris au XVIIIe Siècle. Rétif de la Bretonne : Le Paris populaire.

(Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Musée Carnavalet for the bi-centenary of Restif, in December, 1934, and January, 1935. With an Introduction and Notes. Very well done. The Exhibition was very interesting.)

102. Villeneuve (B. de). L'Œuvre de Restif de la Bretonne. (Le Pornographe, L'Anti-Justine, Dom B . . . aux États généraux), avec essai bibliographique et notes par B. de Villeneuve. Also contains the greater part of the biography by Cubières-Palmézeaux (see No. 60). With 2 illustrations. In " Les Maîtres de L'Amour " series. 1911.

(Only a few pages of *L'Anti-Justine* are given.)

[The above is a selected Bibliography. I have omitted scores of articles which have appeared in French papers and periodicals, and included only the more important. The place of publication of all the above is Paris, except where otherwise stated.]

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